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COMMENTARY

ON

THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

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COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

BY JOHN CALVIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN, AND COLLATED WITH THE LATEST FRENCH VERSION,

BY THE REV. WILLIAM PRINGLE.

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COMMENTARY

ON THE BOOK OF

THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

1. Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou *wast* not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; *and* when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.

1. Vae qui spolias, nec fuisti spoliatus; qui inique agis, nec inique actum in te fuit! Ubi desieris spoliare, spoliaberis; ubi finem inique agendi feceris, inique in te agetur.

2. O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

2. Iehova, miserere nostri; in te speravimus; esto, qui fuisti brachium eorum in matutinis, etiam salus nostra in tempore tribulationis.

3. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered.

3. A voce tumultus fugerunt populi; ab exaltatione tua dissipatæ sunt gentes.

4. And your spoil shall be gathered *like* the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.

4. Et colligetur præda vestra collectione bruchorum; secundum discursum locustarum pergens illuc.

5. The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

5. Exaltatus est Iehova, qui habitat in excelsis. Implevit Sion judicio et justitia.

6. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, *and* strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord *is* his treasure.

6. Et erit stabilitas temporum tuorum fortitudo, salutes, sapientia, et scientia; timor Jehovæ ipse thesaurus ejus.

7. Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without; the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

7. Ecce nuncii eorum vociferabuntur foris; legati pacis amare flebunt.

8. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth; he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.

8. Desolatæ sunt viæ, cessavit viator; irritum fecit fœdus, sprevit civitates, nihil reputavit hominem.

9. The earth mourneth *and* languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed *and* hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off *their fruits*.

9. Luxit, emarcuit terra; pudefactus est Libanus et succisus; facta est Saron instar deserti; excussus est Basan et Carmelus.

10. Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.

10. Nunc surgam, dicit Jehova; nunc exaltabor, nunc extollar.

11. Ye shall conceive chaff; ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, *as* fire, shall devour you.

11. Concipietis quisquilias, parietis stipulas; spiritus vestri ignis devorabit vos.

12. And the people shall be *as* the burnings of lime; *as* thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

12. Et erunt populi combustiones calcis, (*vel, calx combusta,*) tanquam spinæ abscissæ igni exurentur.

13. Hear, ye *that are* far off, what I have done; and, ye *that are* near, acknowledge my might.

13. Audite, qui longe abestis, quid fecerim; cognoscite, vicini, potentiam meam.

14. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

14. Expaverunt in Sion impii; terror apprehendit hypocritas (*vel, sceleratos.*) Quis ex nobis (*vel, pro nobis*) habitabit cum igne devorante? Quis ex nobis habitabit cum ardoribus æternis?

15. He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

15. Ambulans in justitiis, loquens recta, aspernans lucrum ex vi et calumnia, excutiens manus suas a susceptione muneris; obturans aurem suam, ne audiat sanguines; comprimens oculos suos, ne videat malum.

16. He shall dwell on high; his place of defence *shall be* the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters *shall be* sure.

16. Hic in excelsis habitabit; propugnacula petrarum asylum ejus; huic panis dabitur, et aquæ ejus certæ (erunt.)

17. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off.

17. Regem in decore suo videbunt oculi tui; videbunt terram procul remotam.

18. Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where *is* the scribe? where *is* the receiver? where *is* he that counted the towers?

18. Cor tuum meditabitur terrorem. Ubi scriba? Ubi appensor? Ubi qui annotat domos insigniores?

19. Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, *that thou canst* not understand.

19. Populum trucem non videbis, populum abstrusi labii, ut non intelligas; linguæ balbæ, ut non capias.

20. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle *that* shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken:

20. Aspice Sionem civitatem solennitatum (*vel, conventuum*) nostrarum; oculi tui videbunt Ierusalem, habitaculum tranquillum, tentorium quod non transferetur; cujus paxilli non amovebuntur in seculum, et cujus funes cuncti non rumpentur.

21. But there the glorious Lord *will be* unto us a place of broad rivers *and* streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

22. For the Lord *is* our judge, the Lord *is* our lawgiver, the Lord *is* our king; he will save us.

23. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast; they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey.

24. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein *shall be* forgiven *their* iniquity.

21. Adeo (*vel, quia si*) illic fortis nobis Iehova locus fluminum, rivorum spatiis amplorum, per quem non transibit navis remigum, et per quem navis magnifica non pertransibit.

22. Quia Iehova judex noster, Iehova legislator noster, Iehova rex noster; idem servabit nos.

23. Laxati sunt funes tui, ut non solidaverint malum suum, neque expanderint velum; tunc divisa est præda spolii multi, claudi quoque diripuerunt prædam.

24. Nec dicet habitator, Ægrotus sum; populus habitans in ea solutus est ab iniquitate.

1. *Wo to thee that spoilest.* If these words shall be expounded as relating to the Babylonians, the strain will flow easily enough; for, after having promised freedom to the prisoners, (Is. xxxii. 15,) he now appropriately taunts the conquerors. Besides, they needed to be peculiarly confirmed, that they might give credit to a prediction which appeared to be incredible; for they could not think it probable that such vast power would be destroyed and overthrown, and that the wretched prisoners who were now in a state of despair would speedily be permitted to return to their native country. Amidst such distresses, therefore, they might have fainted and given up all hope of safety, if the Prophet had not met them with these exhortations. Accordingly, he anticipates those doubts which might have tormented their minds and tempted them to despair, after having been carried away by the Babylonians, and reduced to slavery; for they saw none of those things which are here promised, but everything entirely opposite.

Yet, as it is almost universally agreed that this is the beginning of a new discourse, and that it is addressed to Sennacherib and his army, I am not unwilling to believe that the Prophet pronounces against the Assyrians, who unjustly oppressed all their neighbours, a threatening which was intended to alleviate the distresses and anxieties of the people. He therefore means that there will be a wonderful revolution of affairs, which will overthrow the flourishing

condition of Nineveh, though it appears to be invincible; for the Babylonians will come in a hostile manner to punish them for that cruelty which they exercised on other nations.

In order to impart greater energy to this discourse, he addresses the Assyrians themselves, "*Wo to thee that plunderest;* you may now ravage with impunity; no one has power to resist you; but there will one day be those who in their turn shall plunder you, as you have plundered others." He speaks to them in the singular number, but in a collective sense, which is very customary. Others read it as a question, "Shalt thou not be spoiled? Dost thou think that thou wilt never be punished for that violence? There will one day be those who will render to thee the like." But we may follow the ordinary exposition, according to which the Prophet exhibits in a striking light the injustice of enemies, who were so eager for plunder that they spared nobody, not even the innocent who had never injured them; for that is a demonstration of the utmost cruelty. I am therefore the more disposed to adopt this exposition, according to which he describes in this first clause what the Assyrians are, shews them to be base and cruel robbers, and gives a strong exhibition of their cruelty in harassing and pillaging harmless and inoffensive persons; so that, when the Jews beheld such unrestrained injustice, they might consider that God is just, and that such proceedings will not always pass unpunished.

When thou shalt have ceased to plunder. This is the second clause of the sentence, by which the Prophet declares that the Assyrians now plunder, because God has given loose reins to them, but that he will one day check them, so that they will have no power to do injury. If we were to understand him to mean, "when they would no longer wish to plunder," that would be a feeble interpretation; but the Prophet advances higher, and declares that the time will come "when they shall make an end of plundering," because the Lord will restrain and subdue them. The meaning is therefore the same as if he had said, "When thou shalt have reached the height;" for we see that tyrants have boundaries assigned to them which they cannot pass. Their

career is rapid, so long as they keep their course; but as soon as the goal, their utmost limit, has been reached, they must stop.

Let us cheer our hearts with this consolation, when we see tyrants insolently and fiercely attack the Church of God; for the Lord will at length compel them to stop, and the more cruel they have been, the more severely will they be punished. The Lord will destroy them in a moment; for he will raise up against them enemies who will instantly ruin and punish them for their iniquities.

Here we ought also to acknowledge the providence of God in the overthrow of kingdoms; for wicked men imagine that everything moves at random and by the blind violence of fortune; but we ought to take quite another view, for the Lord will repay their deserts, so that they shall be made to know that the cruelty which they exercised against inoffensive persons does not remain unrevenged. And the event shewed the truth of this prediction; for not long afterwards Nineveh was conquered by the Babylonians, and lost the monarchy, and was even so completely destroyed that it lost its name. But as Babylon, who succeeded in her room, was not less a "spoiler," the Prophet justly foretells that there will be other robbers to rob her, and that the Babylonians, when their monarchy shall be overthrown, will themselves be plundered of those things which they seized and pillaged from others.

2. *O Jehovah, have pity upon us.* This sentiment was added by the Prophet, in order to remind the godly where they ought to go amidst such distresses, even when they shall appear to be deprived of all hope of safety; that they ought to betake themselves to prayer, to supplicate from God the fulfilment of these promises, even when they shall be most wretched, and when the power of the enemy to oppress them cruelly shall be very formidable. And here we ought carefully to observe the order which the Prophet has followed, in first exhibiting the promise of God and immediately exhorting to prayer. Not only so, but he breaks off the stream of his discourse, and suddenly bursts out into prayer; for although the Lord hastens to perform

what he has promised, yet he delays for a time, in order to exercise our patience. But when we ought to wait, there is found in us no steadfastness or perseverance; our hearts immediately faint and languish. We ought, therefore, to have recourse to prayer, which alone can support and gladden our hearts, while we look earnestly towards God, by whose guidance alone we shall be delivered from our distresses. Yet let us patiently, with unshaken hope and confidence, expect what he has promised to us; for at length he will shew that he is faithful, and will not disappoint us.

At the same time the Prophet bids us not only consider in general the judgment of God against the Assyrians, but God's fatherly kindness towards his chosen people; as if he had said that the Assyrians will be destroyed, not only that they may receive the just reward of their avarice and cruelty, but because in this manner God will be pleased to provide for the safety of his Church. But while he exhorts us to pray for mercy, he likewise declares that we shall be miserable.

In thee have we hoped. In order to cherish the hope of obtaining favour, believers next declare that they "have hoped in God," on whom they now call; and indeed our prayers must be idle and useless, if they are not founded on this principle. "Let thy mercy be upon us," saith David, "according as we have hoped in thee." (Psalm xxxiii. 22.) For to go into the presence of God, if he did not open up the way by his word, would be excessively rash; and, therefore, as he kindly and gently invites us, so we ought to embrace his word, whenever we approach to him. Besides, patience must be added to faith; and, therefore, when faith is taken away, we do not deserve that the Lord should hear us, for it is by faith that we call upon him. Now faith alone is the mother of calling on God, as is frequently declared in many passages of Scripture; and if faith be wanting, there can be nothing left in us but hypocrisy, than which nothing is more abhorred by God. (Rom. x. 14.)

And hence it is evident that there is no Christianity in the whole of Popery; for if the chief part of the worship of God consists of prayer, and if they know not what it is to

pray, (for they bid us continually doubt, and even accuse of rashness the faith of the godly,) what kind of worshippers of God are they? Can that prayer be lawful which is perplexed by uncertainty, and which does not rely with firm confidence on the promises of God? Do not those Rabbins, who wish to be reckoned theologians, shew that they are mere babes? Certainly our children excel them in knowledge and in the true light of godliness.[1]

Let us also learn from these words that our faith is proved by adversity; for the actual trial of faith is when, with unshaken patience in opposition to all dangers and assaults, we continue to rely on the word and the promises. Thus we shall give practical evidence that we have sincerely believed.

Be what thou hast been, their arm in the morning. Others render it as if it were a continued prayer, "Be our arm in the morning, and our salvation in tribulation." As to believers speaking in the third person, they consider it to be a change which is frequently employed by the Hebrews. But I think that the Prophet's meaning is different; for he intended to express that desire which is rendered more intense by benefits formerly received; and, therefore, in my opinion, that clause is appropriately inserted, "their arm in the morning," in which I supply the words "who hast been," in order to bring forward the ancient benefits bestowed by God on the fathers. "Thou, Lord, didst hearken to the prayers of our fathers; when they fled to thee, thou gavest them assistance; now also be thou our salvation, and relieve us from our afflictions."

"Arm" and "salvation" differ in this respect, that "arm" denotes the power which the Lord exerted in defence of his Church, and that before she was afflicted; while "salvation" denotes the deliverance by which the Lord rescues the Church, even when she appears to be ruined. He therefore places on record ancient benefits which the Lord formerly bestowed on the fathers, that he may be moved to exercise the same compassion towards the children. As if he had

[1] "Certainement nos enfans sont plus savans et religieux qu'eux." "Certainly our children are more learned and religious than they are."

said, " O Lord, thou didst formerly turn away the dangers which threatened thy Church; relying on thy favour she flourished and prospered. Thou didst also deliver her when oppressed. In like manner wilt thou act on our own account, especially since it belongs to thy character to render assistance when matters are desperate and at the worst."[1]

The particle אַף, (*ăph,*) *even,* is very emphatic for confirming our faith, that we may not doubt that God, who always continues to be like himself, and never degenerates from his nature or swerves from his purpose, will also be our deliverer; for, such have believers found him to be. We ought, therefore, to place continually before our eyes the manner in which the Lord formerly assisted and delivered the fathers, that we may be fully convinced that we also shall not fail to obtain from him assistance and deliverance.

3. *At the voice of the tumult the peoples fled.* He now returns to the former doctrine, or rather he continues it, after having inserted a short exclamation. He had already shewn that the Assyrians would be defeated, though they appeared to be out of the reach of all danger; and now he bids the Jews look upon it as having actually taken place; for their power was vast, and all men dreaded them and reckoned them invincible. Isaiah therefore places before the eyes of the Jews the dreadful ruin of the Assyrians, as if it had been already accomplished. He makes use of the plural number, saying that they were *peoples;* for the kingdom of the Assyrians consisted of various " peoples," and their army had been collected out of various nations; and therefore he affirms that, although their number was prodigious and boundless, yet they would miserably perish.

At thy exaltation. The word " exaltation" is explained by some to mean the " manifestation" by which the Lord illustriously displayed what he was able to do. But I explain it in a more simple manner, that the Lord, who formerly seemed as it were to remain at rest, when he permitted the Babylonians to ravage with impunity, now sud-

[1] " Puis que ton naturel est d'assister aux tiens, quand tout est reduit au desespoir." " Since thy disposition is to assist thy people when all is reduced to despair."

denly came forth to public view; for his delay was undoubtedly treated with proud scorn by the enemies, as if the God of Israel had been humbled and vanquished; but at length he arose and sat down on his judgment-seat, and took vengeance on the crimes of the ungodly. There is therefore an implied contrast between the "exaltation" and that kind of weakness which the Lord appeared to exhibit, when he permitted his people to be afflicted and scattered.[1]

By "the voice of the tumult" some suppose to be meant that the Lord will put the enemies to flight by merely making a noise; but that interpretation, I fear, is more ingenious than solid. I therefore willingly interpret the word "voice" to mean the loud noise which would be raised by the Medes and Persians.

4. *And your prey shall be gathered.* Here he addresses the Assyrians, if it be not thought preferable to refer it to the Jews, and to take the word "prey" in an active sense. But the former opinion is more appropriate; and this sudden turn of direct address imparts great vehemence to the prediction, when he openly and expressly taunts the proud adversaries. Yet it is doubtful whether it denotes the final ruin of the nation, or the defeat of King Sennacherib, when his army was destroyed by the hand of an angel before the walls of Jerusalem. (2 Kings xix. 35.) The latter opinion has been adopted by almost all commentators, but it appears to me to be too limited; for I think that the Prophet, from the beginning of the chapter, intended to express something more, when he spoke of the destruction of that nation. The prophecy might even be still farther extended, as I suggested a little ago, so as to include likewise the Babylonians, who were the latest enemies of the Church; but, passing this, it is sufficiently evident that his pen is directed against the monarchy of Nineveh.

By your gathering of caterpillars. He compares that warlike nation to "caterpillars," because they will have no power to resist, but will all tremble and faint, so that they

[1] "The *rising* meant is not the ascent of the Judge to the judgment-seat, (Piscator,) nor the exaltation of the Assyrian power, (Aben-Ezra,) but the act of rising from a state of seeming inaction, as when one rouses himself to strike, (Barnes.)"—*Alexander.*

shall be gathered into large heaps to be destroyed. The comparison is highly appropriate, and is employed also by the Prophet Nahum, (iii. 15,) though in a somewhat different sense; for that insect, we know, is exceedingly destructive to trees, and exceedingiy hurtful, so that it may justly be called The calamity of the earth. But as their vast number gives no power to defend themselves, even children can easily shake off, and gather, and slay them in heaps wherever they meet with them. This also, the Prophet declares, will befall those insatiable robbers; for, although they did much injury by plundering for a long period, they will at length be slain and destroyed without the smallest effort; because, deprived of manly vigour, and almost of life, they will fall into the power of their enemies; and the wealth of Nineveh, amassed by robbery, shall be carried to Babylon.

According to the running of locusts. He now adds another comparison, that the Babylonians will "run like locusts," to devour the whole country; for those creatures, being exceedingly voracious, and moving forward without interruption, and leaping with astonishing rapidity, consume all the fruits of the earth. Some refer it to the same Assyrians, as if the Prophet compared them to "locusts," because they will be easily dispersed; but that interpretation does not apply, for the Prophet draws up an army of "locusts," so as completely to cover in its march the whole land; and he beautifully draws a comparison between the "caterpillars" and the "locusts," on account of their insatiable avarice and vast numbers.

5. *Jehovah is exalted.* He explains more fully what we briefly noticed a little before, about the exaltation of God, and follows out the subject which we formerly mentioned, that the destruction of a monarchy so powerful will make it evident how highly God values the salvation of his Church, for whose sake he will utterly ruin Nineveh, the queen of cities, and her inhabitants. This lesson is highly useful, that God does not spare reprobate and irreligious men; for, by opposing their unlawful desires, his object is to testify how much he loves his elect; and it is no ordinary consolation that the glory of God shines most brightly in the salvation of the Church.

Who dwelleth on high. First, he declares that God is raised "on high," whereas wicked men imagine that he was cast down and humbled by the destruction of the people. Again, lest any one should think that God has only recovered what he lost, as it frequently happens in the world that they who have been vanquished, as soon as a favourable change takes place, again put forth fresh vigour, he expressly declares that God is "exalted" before the eyes of men, because this is due to him on account of his greatness, for he inhabiteth the heavens. Hence it follows, that although he frequently conceals his power, yet he never loses his right, but, whenever he thinks proper, openly displays his exalted rank; for to dwell "in the heavens" denotes, as we know, supreme authority, to which the whole world is subject. (Psalm cxv. 3.) In this manner he not only shews that God can easily and readily cast down all that is lofty in the world, but argues from God's eternal nature, that when God is despised by wicked men, he cannot, at length, do otherwise than manifest his glory; for otherwise he would "deny himself." (2 Tim. ii. 13.)

He hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. Thus he again confirms the statement, that it will be a proof of God's wonderful kindness, when the Jews shall be delivered from the tyranny of the Babylonians. It was proper to place before their eyes the Author of so great a blessing; for we see how basely his glory is obscured by our ingratitude. Now, "the fulness of righteousness and judgment" means, that God will largely and copiously pour forth his kindness in restoring the Church. Yet it will not be unsuitable to view these words as referring to lawful order, when everything is justly and properly administered; for without this the Church will never enjoy prosperity, though everything else may succeed according to the wish. Holy and well-adjusted order, therefore, and not corruptible riches, is the standard by which our prosperity should be judged.

6. *And the stability of thy times shall be.* He promises that the state of the kingdom under the reign of Hezekiah will yet be happy and prosperous, especially when he contrasts it with the wretched, destructive, and ruinous aspect which it

exhibited under the reign of Ahaz; for, although the enemy had been driven out, hardly any one would have expected that the Jews, who had been so heavily oppressed, would be restored to their former order. As to the words, some translate them, "Truth, and strength, and salvation shall be in thy times;" as if the Prophet described the prosperity which the nation should enjoy under a pious king; and they think that each of those terms denotes so many of God's benefits. Others think that אמונת[1] (*ĕmūnăth*) denotes "fidelity," as if the Prophet said that it would be "salvation and strength." Others draw from it a somewhat different sense, that "strength, salvation, and knowledge" will be "stable" under the reign of Hezekiah. But when I examine closely the words of the Prophet, I choose rather to make a different distinction, that "*stability*, strength, and salvation will be established by wisdom, and knowledge," during the reign of Hezekiah.

The fear of Jehovah is his treasure. When he says that "the fear of God is the treasure" of a pious king, this accords with the explanation which we have now given; for during peace all men wish to lead a safe and easy life; but few care how they shall enjoy such distinguished benefits. Indeed the greater part of men would desire to fatten like a herd of swine; and thus while all are eagerly directed by blind lust to seek outward benefits, the light of heavenly doctrine, which is an invaluable blessing, is almost set at nought. He therefore means that the prosperity of the Church will be "stable,"[1] when "wisdom and knowledge" shall reign in it; that its "strength" will be lasting, when the "knowledge" of God shall prevail; and that its salvation will be eternal, when men shall be well instructed in the knowledge of God.

This is a very remarkable passage; and it teaches us that our ingratitude shuts the door against God's blessings, when we disregard the Author of them, and sink into gross and earthly desires; and that all the benefits which we can desire or imagine, even though we actually obtained them, would be of no avail for our salvation, if they were not

[1] This word is rendered by Calvin and our own translators, "stability."

seasoned with the salt of faith and knowledge. Hence it follows that the Church is not in a healthy condition unless when all its privileges have been preceded by the light of the knowledge of God, and that it flourishes only when all the gifts which God has bestowed upon it are ascribed to Him as their author. But when the knowledge of God has been taken away, and when just views of God have been extinguished or buried, any kind of prosperity is worse than all calamities.

For these reasons I consider *stability, strength,* and *salvations,* to denote the same thing, that the condition of the Church will be secure, when men shall have been cured of blindness and ignorance, and shall begin to know God. And hence we see what kind of Church the Papists have, distinguished, indeed, by pomp and splendour, but they want this "knowledge," and, therefore, it cannot be stable or secure, and is not a Church of God. If, therefore, the Lord shall grant to us this blessing, that the brightness of faith shall actually shine in the midst of us, other blessings will follow of their own accord, and if we are shaken and tossed about by various tempests, we shall always be supported by the arm of God.

Of thy times. He addresses Hezekiah, not as a private individual, but as the head of the whole people; and he includes the whole people in this description. But since the kingdom of Hezekiah was but a slender shadow of the kingdom of Christ, as we formerly remarked, these words must be referred to Christ, in whom is found true wisdom and knowledge. (Col. ii. 3.)

It is proper to observe the designations which are here employed in order to commend the word of God and the gospel. They are likewise employed by Paul, when he speaks of "teaching in all wisdom and knowledge;" for by this commendation he extols the dignity of the gospel. (Col. i. 9, 28.) Hence also it ought to be inferred that, where Christ is not known, men are destitute of true wisdom, even though they have received the highest education in every branch of learning; for all their knowledge is useless till they truly "know God." (John xvii. 3.)

The fear of Jehovah is his treasure.[1] I think that the expression, "the fear of Jehovah," was added by the Prophet for the sake of explanation, in order to state more fully that the knowledge of which he spoke is the teacher of piety, and is not cold or lifeless, but penetrates powerfully into our heart, to form us to "the fear of God." Hence also, in other passages of Scripture, this "fear" is called "wisdom," or rather "the beginning of wisdom," that is, the substance and chief part of it. (Prov. i. 7, and ix. 10.) It is a mistake to suppose that the word "beginning" denotes rudiments or elements, for Solomon means by it the chief part and design; and the reason is, that, as men are fools till they submit to the word of God, so the perfection of wisdom springs from the docility or obedience of faith. "The fear of God" is therefore called a "treasure," without which all prosperity is miserable; and this shews more fully the scope of the passage, that the full perfection of a happy life consists in the knowledge of God, which we obtain by faith.

Thus, in the person of the king he shews that it is an invaluable blessing to worship God with due piety and reverence. They who are destitute of "the fear of God" are pronounced by him to be miserable and ruined; and, on the other hand, they who "fear the Lord" are declared to be very happy, even though in other respects they be reckoned in the judgment of men to be very miserable. He speaks of that "fear" which contains within itself true obedience, and renews our hearts; for it is a different kind of fear which influences even wicked men, and leads them to dread God as criminals dread a judge. That "fear" does not deserve to be so highly applauded; for it springs neither from a true knowledge of God, nor from a cheerful desire to worship him, and therefore differs widely from that wisdom which Isaiah describes. These statements were made by him in reference to Hezekiah, but, as we have already said, they related to the whole body of the people; and hence we infer that they apply both to men of ordinary rank and to the king, but more especially to Christ, who was filled with "the Spirit of

[1] "Here Judah is spoken of in the third person, though mentioned in the second just before; an enallage frequent in Hebrew poetry."—*Stock.*

the fear of the Lord," as we formerly saw,[1] (Is. xi. 2,) that he might make us partakers of it.

7. *Behold, their messengers*[2] *shall cry without.* It is difficult to determine whether Isaiah relates historically the fearful perplexity and imminent danger to which the Jews were reduced, in order to exhibit more strikingly the favour of deliverance, or predicted a future calamity, that the hearts of the godly might not soon afterwards faint under it. For my own part, I think it probable that this is not the history of a past transaction, but that, as a heavy and sore temptation was at hand, it was intended to fortify the hearts of believers to wait patiently for the assistance of God when their affairs were at the worst. However that may be, the sad and lamentable desolation of the Church is here described, that believers may not cease to entertain good hope even in the midst of their perplexity, and that, when they have been rescued from danger, they may know that it was accomplished by the wonderful power of God.

The ambassadors of peace wept bitterly. It is given as a token of despair, that the ambassadors who had been sent to appease the tyrant were unsuccessful; for every way and method of obtaining peace was attempted by Hezekiah, but without any success. Accordingly, "the ambassadors" returned sad and disconsolate, and even on the road could not dissemble their grief, which it was difficult to conceal in their hearts, when matters were in so wretched a condition. He undoubtedly means that Sennacherib has haughtily and disdainfully refused to make peace, so that "the ambassadors," as if they had forgotten their rank, are constrained to pour out in public their grief and lamentations, and, ere they have returned to their king and given account of their embassy, openly to proclaim what kind of answer they have obtained from the cruel tyrant.[3] Others think that by "the ambas-

[1] See Commentary on Isaiah, vol. i. p. 374.

[2] "Their valiant ones, or messengers."—(Eng. Ver.) "The Targum and some other ancient versions seem to treat אראלם, (*ĕrĕllām,*) as a contraction of אראה לם, (*ĕrĕh lām,* or *ērāĕh lām.*) Thus Aquila has ὀφθήσομαι αὐτοῖς; Symmachus, ὀφθήσομαι; the Vulgate, *videntes.* But there is no example of the form לם (*lām*) for להם (*lāhĕm*)."—*Alexander.*

[3] "Eliakim, with the rest, who returned to Hezekiah, with their clothes

sadors of peace" are meant those who were wont to announce peace; but that interpretation appears to me to be feeble and far-fetched. By "the ambassadors of peace," therefore, I understand to be meant those who had been sent to pacify the king, that they might purchase peace on some condition.

8. *The roads are deserted.* He now adds, that "the roads" will be shut up, so that no one shall go in or out; which commonly happens when war has been declared. The Prophet appears to represent the ambassadors as declaring that henceforth there will be no opportunity of carrying on merchandise, and even that the highways will not be safe.[1] It is immediately added,—

They have violated the treaty. These words are viewed by some commentators as a complaint made by hypocrites that God does not fulfil his promises. If it were thought proper to view them as referring to God, still it would not be necessary to say that such a complaint proceeds from none but wicked men; for sometimes believers also quarrel with God in this manner. But I cannot approve of that interpretation; and, therefore, consider this to be a part of the description which the Prophet gives of the cruelty and insatiable rage of Sennacherib, in treacherously breaking the treaty which he had formerly made with Hezekiah; for, although he had promised that he would maintain peace, yet as soon as an opportunity presented itself for invading Judea, he violated his promise and made preparations for war. Such is also the import of the conclusion of the verse, that *he hath despised the cities, he hath regarded no man,* which means that his cruelty will be so great that he will not be restrained by shame or fear.

9. *The earth hath mourned and languished.* Here he describes more fully how wretched and desperate the Jews would perceive their condition to be, that their confidence

rent, in despair at the rejection of all conditions of peace. Isaiah xxxvi. 2, 22."—*Stock.*

[1] "These are not the words of the ambassadors reporting the condition of the country (Grotius), but of the Prophet himself describing it. The scene presented is not that of Protestant cities seized by Antichrist, and a stop put to a religious course and conversation (Gill), but the actual condition of Judea during the Assyrian invasion. (Compare Judges v. 6)." —*Alexander.*

might nevertheless come forth out of a deep gulf. The places are also specified by him, *Lebanon*, *Bashan*, and *Carmel*, which are widely distant from each other, and which form almost the farthest boundaries of the holy land, in order to shew that no part of it will remain safe or uninjured. He describes this calamity in such a manner as to assign to each place what peculiarly belongs to it. To "Lebanon" he assigns confusion, because it is elsewhere mentioned as beautiful and glorious, in consequence of having been covered with lofty and valuable trees. He declares that "Sharon," which was a level and fertile district, will be "like a wilderness," and that "Bashan and Carmel," which abounded in "fruits," will be "shaken." Thus he alludes to the natural character of each place, and describes the misery and distress in such a manner as to magnify and illustrate the kindness of God, by whom they would be delivered, even though they appeared to be utterly ruined; for here we may see the hand of God openly displayed, if it be not thought preferable to view the Prophet as relating a past transaction in order to excite them to thankfulness.

10. *Now will I rise.* There is great force in the particle *now*, and likewise in the repetition which is added, "I shall be exalted, I shall be lifted up on high." We ought to observe the time to which these statements relate, that is, when the Church appeared to be utterly ruined; for God declares that he will judge that to be the most suitable time for rendering assistance. This is, therefore, a comparison of things which are contrary to each other; for he exhibits to believers the heavy and grievous calamities by which they should be oppressed, and under which they would easily sink, if they were not upheld by some consolation. As if he had said, "The Lord will suffer you to be brought very low, but when your affairs shall be at the worst, and when you shall have in vain tried every remedy, the Lord will arise and succour you." Thus even when we are afflicted and brought very low, we ought to acknowledge that our safety cometh from God alone.

Accordingly, the word *now* denotes a period of the deepest distress. Men might think it exceedingly strange, but we

plainly see the best reason why God thus delays to render assistance. It is, because it is useful to exercise the patience of the godly, to try their faith, to subdue the desires of the flesh, to excite to earnestness in prayer, and to strengthen the hope of a future life; and, therefore, he lays a restraint, that they may not with headlong eagerness anticipate that period which God has already marked out for them. The repetition is very emphatic, and is added for the purpose of confirming the statement; for when our affairs are desperate, we think that we are ruined, but at that very time we ought especially to hope, because the Lord generally selects it for giving a display of his power. For this reason, by extolling his loftiness, he arouses believers to the exercise of courage, that they may boldly defy the insolence of their enemies.[1]

11. *Ye shall conceive chaff.* He now addresses his discourse to the enemies of the Church, whose insolence, he says, is foolish and to no purpose; for when God shall have brilliantly displayed his power, they shall know that their efforts will be fruitless, and that they will accomplish nothing, even though they be leagued together in vast crowds. The Lord laughs at their madness, in thinking that everything is in their power, when he can instantly, by the slightest expression of his will, restrain and destroy them, though they may be defended by a very powerful army.

It is customary in the Scriptures to employ the word *conceptions* for denoting the designs and efforts of men. (Job xv. 35; Ps. vii. 14; Isa. xxvi. 17, and lix. 4.) The metaphor is taken from pregnant women. Men are said to "conceive" and to "bring forth," when they attempt anything; but he declares that their "conception" shall be fruitless, and that they shall also "bring forth" to no purpose, for whatever they undertake shall be unsuccessful. There is nothing, therefore, in the brilliant military forces of our adversaries that ought to alarm us; for, although God may permit them for a time to bustle, and toil, and rage, yet God

[1] "The emphasis is not upon the pronoun (Barnes), which in that case would have been expressed in Hebrew, but upon the adverb *now*, which is twice repeated to imply that the time for the divine interposition is arrived, and that there shall be no more delay."—*Alexander.*

will at length turn into "chaff" all their rash and daring attempts. Let us learn that what Isaiah foretold about Sennacherib relates to all the adversaries of believers and of the Church.

The fire of your breath shall devour you. That they "shall be devoured by the fire of their breath" is usually explained to mean, "Your breath, like fire, shall devour you." But that is an unsuitable and even absurd comparison, and the true meaning readily suggests itself, "The fire kindled by your breath shall devour you." We commonly kindle a fire by blowing, and therefore he declares, that the fire which wicked men have blown by their wicked contrivances shall be destructive to them, because it shall consume them. It is the same statement which is often conveyed by a variety of metaphors in Scripture. "They shall fall into the pit which they have digged. They are entangled in a net which they had prepared for others. The sword which they had drawn hath entered into their own bowels. Their arrow hath been turned back to pierce their own hearts." (Ps. vii. 15; xxxvii. 15; lvii. 6.) Thus the Prophet shews that the wicked tyrant who laid waste Judea and besieged Jerusalem with a numerous army, and all others who in like manner are adversaries of the Church, bring down destruction on themselves, and will at length be destroyed; and, in short, that they will be consumed by that "fire" which they have kindled.

12. *And the peoples shall be the burnings of lime.* He compares them to "the burning of lime," because their hardness shall be bruised, as fire softens the stones, so that they shall easily be reduced to powder; and, undoubtedly, the more powerfully wicked men are inflamed with a desire to commit injury, the more do they bruise themselves by their own insolence.

As thorns cut up.[1] This metaphor is not less appropriate; for although they hinder men from touching them by the

[1] "In the Chaldee כסח (*chāsăch*) signifies "to prune," and in the Syriac it denotes "the pruning of vines," as in Asseman. Bibl. Orient, tom. i. p. 374. The meaning therefore is, as thorns lopped off and dried are quickly consumed, with a crackling noise, by the fire laid under them."—*Rosenmüller.*

painful wounds which they inflict on the hands, yet there is no kind of wood that burns more violently or is more quickly consumed. Something of the same kind, we have said, may be observed in "lime," which at first is hard, but is softened by the fire. The Prophet declares that the same thing will happen to the Babylonians, whom the Lord will easily destroy, though at first they appear to be formidable, and though it may be supposed to be unlikely that they shall be consumed by any conflagration. Whenever, therefore, we behold the enemies of the Church collecting all sorts of wealth and forces, and military preparations, in order to destroy us and set on fire the whole world, let us know that they are kindling a fire which shall miserably destroy them.

We know that this was fulfilled in Sennacherib, for the event proved the truth of these predictions, though they appeared to be altogether incredible. Let us hope that the same thing shall happen to all others who shall imitate the actions of this tyrant, and let us comfort ourselves by that example, and innumerable others, amidst our distresses and afflictions, which shall be followed by certain deliverance and dreadful vengeance on our enemies.

13. *Hear, ye that are far off.* Isaiah here makes a preface, as if he were about to speak on a very weighty subject; for he bids his hearers be attentive, which is commonly done when any important and remarkable subject is handled. He addresses both *those who are near,* who would be eye-witnesses of this event, and the most distant nations to whom the report would be communicated; as if he had said that the power of God will be such as to be perceived not only by a few persons, or by those who are at hand, but also by those who shall be at a very great distance. Thus he means that it will be a striking and extraordinary demonstration of the power of God, because wicked men, who formerly were careless and unconcerned, as if they had been free from all danger of distress or annoyance, shall be shaken with terror.

14. *The sinners in Zion are afraid.* But some one might object that the subject here treated is not so important as to need that lofty preface intended to arouse the whole

world. Was it a matter of so great importance that wicked men were struck with fear? But by an attentive examination it will be found that it is no ordinary exhibition of divine power, when wicked men are aroused from their indolence, so that, whether they will or not, they perceive that God is their judge, especially when contempt of God is accompanied by hypocrisy. For although it is difficult to arouse irreligious men, when a veil is spread over their hearts,[1] yet still greater is the obstinacy of hypocrites, who imagine that God is under obligations to them. Thus we see that men are so bewitched by madness, that they despise all threatenings and terrors, and mock at the judgments of God, and, in short, by witty jesting, set aside all prophecies, so that it ought to be regarded as a miracle that men who make such resistance are overthrown. Hence Isaiah, with good reason, kindles into rage against them; for, when he employs the word *Zion*, he undoubtedly reproves the degenerate Jews, because, when they were covered with the shadow of the sanctuary, they thought that they were in possession of a fortress which could not be stormed; and undoubtedly, as I remarked a little before, the haughtiest and proudest of all men are they who shelter themselves under the name of God, and glory in the title of the Church.

Terror hath seized the wicked. חנפים (*chănēphīm*) is translated *hypocrites*, but still more frequently it may be viewed as denoting "treacherous revolters and men utterly worthless." Since, therefore, they were so wicked, and mocked at God and the prophets, he threatens that God will be a judge so sharp and severe, that they shall no longer find pleasure in their impostures. Next is added a confession which wears the aspect of humility, in order to shew more clearly that hypocrites, who do not willingly obey God, at length find that experience is their instructor how dreadful is the judgment of God. As soon, therefore, as their "laughing" is turned into "gnashing of teeth," they begin to acknowledge that their whole strength is chaff or stubble. (Luke vi. 25; Matt. viii. 12.)

Which of us shall dwell with the devouring fire? As to

[1] "Quand leurs cœurs sont endurcis." "When their hearts are hardened."

the meaning of the words, some translate them, "Who shall dwell *instead of us?*" Others, "Which *of us* shall dwell?" If we view them simply as meaning "to us," or "for us," the meaning may be thus explained, "Who shall encounter the fire, or place himself between, so that the flame may not reach us?" There are also other interpretations which amount to the same thing; but commentators differ in this respect, that some view the words as relating to the king of Assyria, and others as relating to God. I prefer the latter opinion, as has been already shewn; for although the king of Assyria might be regarded as a "fire" that would burn up the earth with his heat, yet the Prophet intended to express something far more dreadful, namely, the inward anguish by which ungodly men are tormented, the stings of conscience which cannot be allayed, the unquenchable burning of crimes which exceeds every kind of torments; for whatever is the course pursued by ungodly men, such will they find the dispensations of God to be towards them.

On their account, therefore, God is called *a devouring fire*, as we may learn from Moses, (Deut. iv. 24, and ix. 3,) from whom the prophets, as we have frequently remarked, borrow their doctrines, and who is also followed by the Apostle. (Heb. xii. 29.) This exposition is confirmed by the Prophet himself, who shews what was the cause of that terror. It might be objected that God was excessively severe, and that he terrified them beyond measure; but he is usually kind and gentle to the godly, while wicked men feel that he is severe and terrible. Some think that the Prophet intended to convince all men of their guilt, in order that they might abandon all confidence in their works, and in a lowly and humble manner betake themselves to the grace of God, as if he had said, "None but he who is perfectly righteous can stand before the judgment-seat of God, and therefore all are accursed."

But he rather speaks in the name, and agreeably to the feelings, of those who formerly scorned all threatenings; and he now represents those very persons as inquiring with trembling dismay, "Who shall dare to go into the presence of God?" This mournful complaint is a manifestation of that

terror which hath lately seized them, when, being convinced of their frailty, they cry out in sorrow, "Who shall endure the presence of God?" But since they still murmur against God, though he compels them reluctantly to utter these words, the Prophet, on the other hand, in order to restrain their wicked barkings, replies that God is not naturally the object of terror or alarm to men, but that it arises through their own fault, because conscience, which God does not suffer to lie idle, terrifies them with their crimes.

15. *He that walketh in righteousness.* Now, therefore, he explains more fully what we briefly remarked a little before, that they who provoke his anger, and thus drive away from them his forbearance, have no right to complain that God is excessively severe. Thus he convinces them of their guilt and exhorts them to repentance, for he shews that there is a state of friendship between God and men, if they wish to follow and practise "righteousness," if they maintain truth and integrity, if they are free from all corruptions and act inoffensively towards their neighbours; but because they abound in every kind of wickedness, and have abandoned themselves to malice, calumny, covetousness, robbery, and other crimes, it is impossible that the Lord should not strike them down with fear, by shewing that he is terrible to them. In short, the design of the Prophet is to shut the mouths of wicked babblers, that they may not accuse God of cruelty in their destruction; for the whole blame rests on themselves. By evasions they endeavour to escape condemnation. But the Prophet declares that God is always gracious to his worshippers, and that in this sense Moses calls him "a fire," (Deut. iv. 24, and ix. 3,) that men may not despise his majesty and power; but that every one who shall approach to him with sincere piety will know by actual experience that nothing is more pleasant or delightful than his presence. Since, therefore, God shines on believers with a bright countenance, they enjoy settled peace with him through a good conscience; and hence it follows that God is not naturally terrible, but that he is forced to it by our wickedness.

This discourse is directed chiefly against hypocrites, who

throw a false veil of piety over their hidden pollutions and crimes, and make an improper use of the name of God, that they may indulge more freely in wickedness. By the examples which he adduces in illustration of "righteousness," the Prophet more openly reproves their crimes. He enumerates the principal actions of life by means of which we shew what sort of persons we are. Here, as in many other passages, he treats of the second table of the Law, by which the sincerity of godliness is put to the test; for, as gold is tried in the fire, so the dispositions which we cherish towards God are ascertained from the habitual course of our life, when our sincerity comes to be seen by the duties which we owe to each other.

The word *walketh* is the well-known metaphor of a road, which is frequently employed in Scripture for describing the manner of life or habitual conduct. By *righteousness* he means not the entire keeping of the Law, but that equity which is included in the second table; for we must not imagine that subtle disquisitions about "righteousness" are here intended.

Who speaketh what is right. He now enumerates the chief parts of that uprightness which ought to be maintained; and as the tongue is the chief instrument by which a man regulates his actions, he places it in the second rank after "righteousness." He who restrains it from slander and evil-speaking, from deceit, perjury, and falsehood, so as not to injure his brother in any matter, is said to "speak what is right." Next is added another department,—

Who despiseth the gain arising from violence and calumny. He might have said in a single word, "who despiseth money;" but he employed more homely language, and accommodated himself to the ignorance of men. He who is desirous of riches, and does not refrain from robbery or from base and unlawful means of making gain, harasses and oppresses the poor and feeble, and cares for nothing else than to lay hold on money in every direction, and by every method either right or wrong. He next proceeds farther, and describes corruptions of every sort.

Who shaketh his hands from accepting a bribe. Under the

name of *bribes*, by which judges are corrupted, he likewise includes everything else. There is nothing by which the dispositions of men and righteous judgment are so much perverted; and therefore he bids them "shake their hands," so as to intimate in what abhorrence they should be held, and with what care they should be avoided by all, lest, if they only handled or were tainted by barely touching them, they should be drawn aside from what is just and right; for "bribes" have wonderful powers of fascination, so that it is very difficult for judges to keep their hands altogether clean and uncorrupted by them. What, then, can we think of those who always have their hands stretched out and ready to receive, and crooked nails ready to catch; and not only so, but, like harlots, openly hire themselves out for gain? Need we wonder if God thunders against them with unrelenting vengeance?

Who stoppeth his ear that it may not hear blood. At length he demands that the manifestation of uprightness shall be made in the *ears*. By *blood* he means murder and manslaughter, but he likewise includes wicked conspiracies of every kind, that the "ears" may not be open to hear them, so as to give our consent. He does not mean that our "ears" should be shut against the cries of the poor, when they suffer injuries and oppression; but he means that we should detest wicked devices by which unprincipled men contrive the ruin of the innocent, that we may not even lend our "ears" to their discourses, or allow ourselves to be solicited in any way to do what is evil.

Who shutteth his eyes. At length he demands the same holiness in the "eyes." In short, he teaches that we ought to restrain all our senses, that we may not give to wicked men any token of our approbation, if we wish to escape the wrath of God and that terrible burning of which he formerly spake.

16. *He shall dwell in high places.* That the Jews may know that the chastisements which God had inflicted on them were righteous, and may endeavour to be restored to his favour, he says that his blessing is ready to be bestowed on good and upright men, such as he described in the former

verse, and that they are not subject to any danger, and have no reason to dread that burning which he mentioned, because they shall be made to dwell in a place of the greatest safety. As to wicked men, slanderers, robbers, and deceitful persons, on the other hand, who cannot restrain their tongue, and hands, and ears, and eyes from base and wicked actions, the Prophet shews that we need not wonder if God treat them with severity, and that, while God is their judge, their own conscience is at the same time their executioner; and consequently, that the only means of hindering them from dreading the presence of God, is to keep themselves voluntarily in the fear of God. By "high places," he means a very safe place, and free from all danger, which no attack of the enemy can reach, as he declares plainly enough immediately afterwards by assigning to them a habitation among "fortified rocks."

Bread shall be given to him. To a safe dwelling he adds an abundance of good things; as if he had said that the holy and upright worshippers of God shall lack nothing, because God will not only protect them so as to keep them safe from all danger, but will also supply them abundantly with all that is necessary for the support of life. By the words "bread" and "water" he means all the daily necessaries of life.

And his waters shall be sure. Though wicked men have abundance for a time, they shall afterwards be hungry; as God threatens in the Law, that they shall have famine and hunger. (Lev. xxvi. 19; Deut. xxviii. 23, 48.) The same remark may be made with regard to "bread," for the word "sure" relates to both; as if he had said, that all believers shall have their food made "sure." "Lions are hungry, and wander about; but they that fear God shall not want any good thing," (Psalm xxxiv. 10;) because God, who is by nature bountiful, is not wearied by bestowing liberally, and does not exhaust his wealth by acts of kindness.

Besides, as the life of men is exposed to various dangers, and as abundance of meat and drink is not all that is necessary for our support, unless the Lord defend us by his power, we ought, therefore, to observe carefully what he formerly

mentioned, that believers are placed in a safe abode. The Lord performs the office of a shepherd, and not only supplies them with food, but also defends them from the attacks of robbers, enemies, and wolves; and, in short, keeps them under his protection and guardianship, so as not to allow any evil to befall them. Whenever, therefore, it happens, that enemies annoy us, let us consider that we are justly punished for our sins, and that we are deprived of God's assistance because we do not deserve it; for we must reckon our sins to be the cause of all the evils which we endure.

Yet let not those who are conscious of their integrity imagine that God has forsaken them, but let them to the latest day of their life rely on those promises in which the Lord assures his people that he will be a very safe refuge to them. No man, indeed, can be so holy or upright as to be capable of enduring the eye of God; for "if the Lord mark our iniquities," as David says, "who shall endure?" (Psalm cxxx. 3.) We therefore need a mediator, through whose intercession our sins may be forgiven; and the Prophet did not intend to set aside the ordinary doctrine of Scripture on this subject, but to strike with terror wicked men, who are continually stung and pursued by an evil conscience.[1] This ought to be carefully observed in opposition to the Popish doctors, by whom passages of this kind, which recommend works, are abused in order to destroy the righteousness of faith; as if the atonement for our sins, which we obtain through the sacrifice of Christ, ought to be set aside.

17. *The king in his beauty.* Although the Prophet changes the person, yet this verse must be connected with the preceding verse; for he addresses the sincere worshippers of God, to whom he promises this additional blessing, *Thou shalt see the king in his beauty.* This promise was highly necessary for supporting the hearts of believers, when the state of affairs in Judea was so lamentable and so desperate. When Jerusalem was besieged, the king shut up within the city and surrounded by treacherous counsellors, the people

[1] "D'un remords de mauvaise conscience." "By the remorse of a bad conscience."

unsteady and seditious, and everything hastening to ruin, there appeared to be no hope left. Still the royal authority in the family of David was a remarkable pledge of the love of God. Isaiah, therefore, meets this danger by saying, that though they behold their king covered with filthy garments, yet he shall be restored to his former rank and splendour.

First, it ought to be observed how invaluable is the kindness of God, when the commonwealth is at peace, and enjoys good princes, by whom everything is administered justly and faithfully; for by their agency God rules over us. Since, therefore, this happiness is not inconsiderable, the Prophet was unwilling to leave out this part, in promising prosperity to the worshippers of God. Yet it ought also to be observed, that that kingdom was a type of the kingdom of Christ, whose image Hezekiah bore; for there would be a slight fulfilment of this promise, if we did not trace it to Christ, to whom all these things must be understood to refer. Let no man imagine that I am here pursuing allegories, to which I am averse, and that this is the reason why I do not interpret the passage as relating directly to Christ; but, because in Christ alone is found the stability of that frail kingdom, the likeness which Hezekiah bore leads us to Christ, as it were, by the hand. I am, therefore, disposed to view Hezekiah as a figure of Christ, that we may learn how great will be his beauty. In a word, Isaiah here promises the restoration of the Church.

The land very far off. The restoration of the Church consists of two parts; first, that "the king shall be seen in his beauty;" and secondly, that the boundaries of the kingdom shall be extended. We know that the appearance of Christ is so disfigured as to be contemptible in the eyes of the world, because "no beauty or loveliness" (Is. liii. 2) is seen in him; but at length, his majesty and splendour and beauty shall be openly displayed, his kingdom shall flourish and be extended far and wide. Although at present wicked men have everything in their power, and oppress the true servants of God, so that they scarcely have a spot on which they can plant their foot in safety, yet with firm hope we

ought to look for our King, who will at length sit down on his bright and magnificent throne, and will gloriously enrich his people.

18. *Thy heart shall meditate terror.* Believers are again informed what calamities are at hand, lest, by being suddenly overtaken with such heavy afflictions, they should sink under them. יהגה (*yĕhgĕh*) is translated by some in the preterite, "meditated," and by others in the future, "shall meditate;" because such an exchange of tenses is customary in the Hebrew language. For my own part, believing that he warns the people of approaching distresses, instead of relating those which had been formerly endured, I willingly retain the future tense, which is also the tense employed by the Prophet, "shall meditate."

Where is the scribe? He relates in a dramatic and lively manner (μιμητικῶς) the speeches of those who, overcome by terror, break out into these exclamations: *Where is the scribe? Where is the weigher?* thus expressing the powerful impression made on their minds. If any one suppose that the line of thought is suddenly broken off, because the Prophet, having in the former verse spoken of "the king's beauty," now brings forward terrors, I have no doubt that he magnifies the kindness of God by means of comparison, in order that believers, when they have been delivered, may set a higher value on the condition to which they have attained. Men are forgetful and niggardly in judging of God's favours, and, after having been once set free, do not consider what was the depth of their misery. Such persons need to be reminded of those wretched and disastrous times, during which they endured great sufferings, in order that they may more fully appreciate the greatness of the favour which God has bestowed on them. We ought also to observe another reason why it was advantageous that the people should be forewarned of that terror. It was that, after having heard of the king's magnificence, they might not promise themselves exemption from all uneasiness, but might be prepared to undergo any kind of troubles and distresses, and that, even while they were subject to tribute and placed under siege, they might know that the kingdom

of Judah was the object of God's care, and would be rescued from the hands of tyrants.

It is a very wretched condition which the Prophet describes, that a free people should be oppressed by such cruel tyranny as to have all their property valued, and an inventory taken of their houses, possessions, families, and servants. How grievous this slavery is, many persons formerly unaccustomed to it actually know by experience in our times, when their property is valued to the very last farthing, and a valuation is made not only of their undoubted incomes but also of their expected gains, and not only their money and possessions, but even their names are placed on record, while new methods of taxation are contrived, not only on food but on the smallest articles, so that tyrants seize on a large portion of those things which are indispensably necessary to the wretched populace ; and yet those calamities do not restrain men from insolence, licentiousness, and rebellion. What then will happen when they shall be free and at full liberty ? Will they not, forgetful of all their distresses, and unmindful of God's kindness, abandon themselves more freely than before to every kind of indulgence and licentiousness ? It is not without good reason, therefore, that the Prophet places before the eyes of the people that wretched condition, that they may not, when delivered from it, give way to their unlawful passions, but may acknowledge their deliverer and may love him with all their heart.

Some have falsely imagined that Paul (1 Cor. i. 20) quotes this passage ; for that would spoil the Prophet's meaning and torture his words to a different purpose. They have been led into a mistake by the mere use of the word "scribe," which there denotes a Teacher. Isaiah gives the name of "the scribe" to the person who took account of persons, families, lands, and houses, and, in short, who kept the registers of the taxes. By "the weigher," he means the person who received the taxes, for he "weighed" the money which was paid. That office is discharged in the present day by those who are called treasurers.

Where is he who singles out the principal houses ? He now adds a very troublesome and exceedingly disliked class of

men, "the describers of the towers," that is, of the more remarkable buildings; for they visit and examine each person's house, in order to know who are more wealthy than others, that they may demand a larger sum of money. Such men, like hunting-hounds, are commonly employed by tyrants to scent the track of money, for the sake of laying on some unusual impost in addition to the ordinary taxes. The arrival of such persons must have been exceedingly annoying to the people, for they never cease till they have sucked all the blood and marrow. If any one prefer to view this term as denoting the servants of the king himself, whose business it was to destroy the houses adjoining to the walls of the city, let him enjoy his opinion. For my own part, I think it probable that the Prophet speaks of the receivers of taxes, whom conquerors appoint over vanquished nations for the sake of maintaining their authority.

19. *Thou shalt not see a fierce people.* The word נועז (*nōgnāz*) is translated by some "strong," and by others "impudent;" but, undoubtedly, he intends to express the fierceness of the Assyrians, which he afterwards affirms by saying that they would have no intercourse with them, because they spoke a different language. Nothing is more fitted to excite men to compassion than the intercourse of speech, by which men explain their distresses to each other. When this is wanting, there can be no means of gaining their hearts; each party is a barbarian to the other; and nothing more can be obtained from them than if one were dealing with wild and savage beasts. The Prophet, therefore, dwells largely on the wretched condition of the people, in order to shew, on the other hand, how great was the kindness of God in delivering them from so great terror. In like manner, the Holy Spirit magnifies the grace of God, in preserving his people in Egypt, though "they did not understand the language of that nation." (Psalm lxxxi. 5.)

20. *Behold Zion.* Some read it in the vocative case, "Behold, O Zion;" but it is preferable to read it in the accusative case. He brings forward a promise of the restoration of the Church, which ought to have great weight with all godly persons; for when the Church shakes or falls, there

can be no hope of prosperity. That the Church will be restored he shews in such a manner that he places it before our eyes as having actually taken place, though he speaks of what is future; and his object is to give greater energy to his style, as if he had said, "Again you will see Zion restored and Jerusalem flourishing." Although believers see everything destroyed and scattered, and although they despair of her safety, yet in Jerusalem there shall be a quiet and safe habitation.

The city of our solemnities, or *of our assemblies*. By this designation he shews that we ought to judge of the restoration of Zion chiefly on this ground, that the people "assembled" there to hear the Law, to confirm the covenant of the Lord, to call upon his name, and to offer sacrifices. When the people were deprived of these things, they were scattered and nearly lost, and appeared to be separated from their head and utterly abandoned. Accordingly, nothing was so deeply lamented by godly persons, when they were held in captivity at Babylon, as to be banished from their native country and at the same time deprived of those advantages; and that this was the chief complaint of all believers is very manifest from many passages. (Psalm cxxxvii. 4.)

"Zion" is called by him "a city," because it formed the middle of the city, and was also called "the city of David." (Isaiah xxii. 9.) The extent of Jerusalem was different and larger; for, as we mentioned in the explanation of another passage,[1] there was a double wall, which is customary in many cities. Here it ought to be observed that the restoration of the Church is the most valuable of all blessings, and ought above all things to be desired; that everything else, even though it should be most abundant, is of no avail, if this single blessing be wanting; and, on the other hand, that we cannot be unhappy, so long as Jerusalem, that is, the Church, shall flourish. Now, it is restored and flourishes, when God presides in our assemblies, and when we are assembled in his name and thus cleave to him. Wicked men indeed shelter themselves under the name of God, as if they were assembled at his command; but it is an empty mask,

[1] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. ii. p. 118.

for in their heart they are very far from him, and attempt nothing in obedience to his authority.

Jerusalem a peaceful habitation. He says that believers, who had long been agitated amidst numerous alarms, will have a safe and "peaceful habitation" in the Church of God. Although God gave to his people some taste of that peace under the reign of Hezekiah, yet it was only in Christ that the fulfilment of it was manifested. Not that since that time the children of God have had a quiet habitation in the world; even in the present day this peacefulness is concealed; for we lead an exceedingly wandering and uncertain life, are tossed about by various storms and tempests, are attacked by innumerable enemies, and must engage in various battles, so that there is scarcely a single moment that we are at rest. The peace which is promised, therefore, is not that which can be perceived by our bodily senses, but we must come to the inward feelings of the heart, which have been renewed by the Spirit of God, so that we enjoy that peace which no human understanding is able to comprehend; for, as Paul says, "it goes beyond all our senses." (Phil. iv. 7.) The Lord will undoubtedly bestow it upon us, if we dwell in the Church.

A tent which shall not be carried away, the stakes of which shall never be removed. By these metaphors of "a tabernacle" and of "stakes," he describes accurately the condition of the Church. He might have called it a well-founded city, but he says that it is "a tabernacle," which, by its very nature, is such that it can be speedily removed to a different place, in order that, though we may consider the condition of the Church to be uncertain and liable to many changes, yet we may know that it cannot be moved or shaken; for it will remain in spite of storms and tempests, in spite of all the attacks of enemies, and in opposition to what appears to be its nature, and to the views of our understanding. These two statements appear to be inconsistent with each other, and faith alone reconciles them, by maintaining that it is safer to dwell in this "tabernacle" than in the best defended fortresses.

We ought to employ this as a shield against temptations,

which otherwise would speedily destroy our faith, whenever we perceive the Church to be not only shaken, but violently driven about in all possible directions. Who would say that amidst that violent storm the "tabernacle" was safe? But since God does not wish his people to be wholly fixed on the earth, that they may depend more on himself alone, the protection which he promises to us ought to be reckoned better than a hundred, better than a thousand supports.

21. *Because there the mighty Jehovah will be to us.* The two particles כִּי אִם (*kī īm*) often serve the place of a double affirmative, but here a reason is assigned, and they might even be appropriately rendered, *For if;* but I willingly retain what is more clear. The Prophet assigns the reason why the Church, which appears to resemble a movable "tent," exceeds in stability the best founded cities. It is because "the Lord is in the midst of her," as it is also said, (Psalm xlvi. 5,) and "therefore she shall not be moved." If we separate the Church from God, it will immediately fall without any attack; for it will consist of men only, than whom nothing can be more weak or frail.

Will be to us a place of rivers. When God dwells with us, he confirms and supports what was naturally feeble, and supplies to us the place of a very strong fortress, a very broad ditch, and walls and "rivers" surrounding the city on every side. He alludes to the situation of the city Jerusalem, which had only a small rivulet, and not large and rapid rivers, like those of Babylon and other cities; for in another passage (Isaiah viii. 6) he enjoined them to rest satisfied with the power of God alone, and not to covet those broad rivers. As if he had said, "Our strength shall be invincible, if God rule over us; for under his guidance and direction we shall be abundantly fortified."

There shall not pass a ship with oars. Large rivers are attended by this inconvenience, that they may give access to enemies, so as to enable them to approach with their ships nearer than is desirable; and thus, very frequently, what appeared to be of service is found to be injurious. But while the Lord says that he will be "a river," he says also that there will be no reason to dread

such an inconvenience, and that enemies will not be allowed to approach. He mentions two kinds of ships, long ships, and ships of burden, in order to shew that enemies will be shut out in every possible way. Hence we ought to draw a very useful doctrine, that the hope of safety should not be sought from any other than from God alone, and that it is in vain to collect various means of defence, which will be useless, and even hurtful, if He be not on our side.

22. *For Jehovah is our judge.* The Prophet now explains the manner in which God dwells in the Church. It is, that he is there worshipped and acknowledged as *Judge*, *Lawgiver*, and *King;* for they who obey God and yield subjection to him as their *King*, shall know by experience that he is the guardian of their salvation; but they who falsely glory in his name, vainly hope that he will assist them. Let us only yield to his authority, hear his voice, and obey him; and, on the other hand, he will shew that he is our protector and most faithful guardian. But when we despise his voice and disobey his word, we undoubtedly have no reason to wonder that he abandons and forsakes us in dangers.

Hence, also, we ought to observe what is the true Church of God. It is that which acknowledges God to be a "Lawgiver" and "King." With what effrontery, therefore, do the Papists dare to boast that they are the Church of God, seeing that they reject that lawful government of it which was enjoined by Moses, and the Prophets, and Christ, and substitute in the room of it inventions and base traffic? They exert a cruel tyranny over consciences, and, by taking away all the liberty which Christ has bestowed on us, they wretchedly harass souls and lead them to perdition; but God alone has the right to rule the conscience, because he alone is "Lawgiver" and "Judge," and he alone ought to rule and guide us by his word. He combines here the three words, "Judge," "Lawgiver," and King," because the subject is of very great importance, and ought not to be lightly set aside. If, therefore, we permit ourselves to be guided by his word, he will never fail us; and this is the only way of obtaining salvation.

23. *Thy cords were loosed.* He directs his discourse to the Assyrians, in whose person he likewise addresses all the enemies of the Church. After having promised to the Church such stability as shall never be disturbed, he rebukes the foolish confidence with which ungodly men are puffed up; as if they had been so deeply rooted as to reach the centre of the earth. Although, during the intoxicating influence of prosperity, they imagine that their wealth is exceedingly secure, he foretells that ruin will quickly overtake them, because they are not supported by the hand of God.

He follows out the comparison which he had employed at the commencement. Having said that the Church resembles a place that is fortified and surrounded by very broad rivers which do not admit the approach of enemies, he now compares the condition of wicked men to ships; by which he means that they have no solid foundation, though they appear to be formidable, and though they are madly eager and fiercely cruel, and imagine that none can resist their rage. Although, therefore, they have long ships and ships of burden, by which they may be said to form a union between countries placed at great distances from each other, and to make themselves masters of sea and land, still they shall have no permanency or stability. The Lord will sink their ships, will take away their ropes and masts, and will involve them in a universal shipwreck. Let us not therefore be terrified by their fury and insolence, but let us look for the day of the Lord, when he shall make their rage and violence to fall on their own heads.

24. *And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.* The Prophet again returns to the Church; for the destruction which he threatened against the Assyrians tended also to the consolation of the godly, since the safety of the Church could not be maintained unless the Lord granted his protection against so many adversaries who attack and molest her on every hand. Accordingly, having briefly remarked that all the reprobate who annoy the children of God shall be defeated, he appropriately follows out his subject by affirming that God will leave nothing undone that could promote

the salvation of the godly. He says, therefore, that the citizens of the Church shall be freed from every inconvenience, because through the favour of God they shall enjoy prosperity.

The people that dwell in it have been freed from iniquity. This latter clause of the verse explains the former; for it shews that there is nothing to prevent the blessings of God from being largely enjoyed by us, when our sins have been pardoned. Hence, also, we conclude, that all the miseries which press upon us spring from no other source than from our sins. On any other ground the reason which he assigns might appear to be far-fetched and inappropriate; but we must hold this principle, that all the evils which God inflicts upon us are so many tokens of his anger. Hence it follows that, when guilt has been removed, nothing remains but that God will regard us with the affection of a father, and will graciously bestow upon us all that we need. If, therefore, we desire to be delivered from afflictions, we ought to observe this order, to seek first to be reconciled to God; for the removal of the cause would be speedily followed by the removal of the effect.

But seeing that our desires are ill-regulated, and that, in consequence of being anxious merely to avoid punishments, we shut our eyes against the root of our distresses, we need not wonder that we obtain no alleviation of them. Those persons, therefore, are mistaken who indulge in their vices, and yet wish to be exempted from every kind of afflictions. If they do not suffer any adversity, still they will not cease to be miserable, and cannot enjoy peace of mind so long as they are pursued by the consciousness of their crimes. Consequently, true happiness consists in this, that we have obtained pardon from God, and sincerely believe that all the blessings which we receive from his hand are the results of his fatherly kindness.

Let us also learn that there is no other way in which we can please God, or obtain the honour of being accounted his children, than when he ceases to impute to us our sins; and therefore it is only the reconciliation which we obtain by free grace that pacifies God toward us, and opens up the

way to the enjoyment of his goodness. That there is no visible evidence of that exemption from afflictions does not lessen the truth of the promise, because believers are abundantly satisfied with this comfort in their afflictions, that even when they are chastened by the hand of God, still they are his beloved children. So far as they have been renewed by his Spirit, they begin to taste the blessing which was in full perfection before the fall of Adam; but because they are burdened with many sins, they constantly need to be cleansed. Still, however, through compassion on their weakness, God mitigates their punishment, and, if not by removing altogether, yet by abating and soothing their grief, shews that he promotes their happiness; and therefore it is not without good reason that the Prophet declares the Church to be exempted from ordinary calamities, so far as they proceed from the curse of God.

Hence, also, we see clearly how childish is the distinction of the Papists, that the removal of guilt is of no avail; as if we had to satisfy the judgment of God. But far otherwise do the prophets teach, as may be easily learned from various passages; and if there had been nothing more than this single passage, can anything be plainer than that sicknesses come to an end, because iniquity has been pardoned? The meaning is undoubtedly the same as if he had said, that punishment ceases because sin has been pardoned. True, indeed, though God has been pacified towards them,[1] he sometimes inflicts punishment on believers; and the object is, that by fatherly chastisement he may instruct them more fully for the future, and not that he may take vengeance on them, as if he had been but half reconciled. But Papists think that their punishments are of the nature of satisfactions, and that by paying them the sinner in some measure redeems himself, and puts away his guilt; which is absolutely inconsistent with a free pardon. Thus their abominable inventions, both about satisfactions, and about the fire of purgatory, fall to the ground.

It is also worthy of observation, that none but the citizens of the Church enjoy this privilege; for, apart from the body

[1] "Encore qu'il leur ait pardonné." "Though he has forgiven them."

of Christ and the fellowship of the godly, there can be no hope of reconciliation with God. Hence, in the Creed we profess to believe in "The Catholic Church and the forgiveness of sins;" for God does not include among the objects of his love any but those whom he reckons among the members of his only-begotten Son, and, in like manner, does not extend to any who do not belong to his body the free imputation of righteousness. Hence it follows, that strangers who separate themselves from the Church have nothing left for them but to rot amidst their curse. Hence, also, a departure from the Church is an open renouncement of eternal salvation.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

1. Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it.

1. Accedite gentes ad audiendum, et populi attendite. Audiat terra, et plenitudo ejus; orbis, et cuncta germina ejus.

2. For the indignation of the Lord *is* upon all nations, and *his* fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.

2. Quia indignatio est Iehovæ super omnes gentes, et furor super omnem exercitum earum; vastavit eas, tradidit eas in mactationem.

3. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

3. Interfecti earum abjicientur, et e cadaveribus eorum ascendet fœtor earum, ac liquefient montes præ sanguine eorum.

4. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling *fig* from the fig-tree.

4. Et tabescent omnes exercitus cœlorum, et complicabuntur ut liber. Cœli et omnes exercitus eorum defluent, sicut defluit folium e vite, et sicut defluit ex ficu.

5. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.

5. Quoniam inebriatus est in cœlis gladius meus. Ecce, super Ædom descendet, super populum, inquam, anathematis mei in judicium.

6. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood; it is made fat with fatness, *and* with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kid-

6. Gladius Iehovæ impletus est sanguine, impinguatus est ab adipe; sanguine, inquam, agnorum et hircorum, adipe renum arietum. Quo-

neys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.

7. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.

8. For *it is* the day of the Lord's vengeance, *and* the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.

9. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.

10. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever:

11. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness.

12. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none *shall be* there, and all her princes shall be nothing.

13. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be an habitation of dragons, *and* a court for owls.

14. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.

15. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate.

16. Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read; no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

17. And he hath cast the lot for

niam victima Iehovæ in Bozra, et mactatio magna in terra Ædom.

7. Et descendent unicornes cum eis, et juvenci cum tauris; et inebriabitur terra eorum sanguine, et pulvis adipe impinguabitur.

8. Quoniam dies ultionis Iehovæ, annus retributionum in causam Sion.

9. Et convertentur flumina ejus in picem, et pulvis ejus in sulphur; eritque terra ejus in picem ardentem.

10. Noctu et die non extinguetur, perpetuo ascendet fumus ejus; a generatione in generationem devastabitur, perpetuis æternitatibus nemo transibit per eam.

11. Itaque accipient eam in possessionem pelicanus et ulula; noctua et corvus habitabunt in ea; extendetque super eam funiculum inanitatis et lapides perpendiculares vanitatis.

12. Nobiles ejus sine regno vacabunt, et cuncti principes ejus erunt nihilum.

13. Proferet in palatiis ejus spinas, et urticam, et carduum in arcibus ejus; eritque habitaculum draconum, et mansio pullis struthionis.

14. Et occurrent bestiæ sylvestres satyris, et stryx ad socium suum vociferabitur; etiam Lamia ibi pernoctabit, invenietque sibi mansionem quietam.

15. Ulula faciet ibi nidum, et incubabit, et excludet, et congregabit in umbra ejus; quinetiam vultures ibi congregabuntur, unaquæque cum socia sua.

16. Sciscitamini ex libro Iehovæ, et legite. Nunquid unum ex illis fuerit substractum; nullum sociæ suæ deerit; quoniam os ejus præcepit, et spiritus ejus congregavit eas.

17. Et ipse projecit eis sortem, et

them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

manus ejus divisit illis in perpetuum, quasi per funiculum. Ideo hæreditabunt eam, in generationem et generationem illic habitabunt.

1. *Draw near, ye nations.* Hitherto the Prophet, intending to comfort the children of God, preached, as it were, in the midst of them; but now, directing his discourse to the Gentiles, he pursues the same subject, but in a different manner. Having formerly shewn (Isaiah xxxiii. 6, 20) that the Lord takes such care of his people as to find out the means of preserving them, he now likewise adds, what we have often seen in earlier parts of this book, that, after having permitted wicked men to harass them for a time, he will at length be their avenger. He therefore pursues the same subject, but with a different kind of consolation; for he describes what terrible vengeance the Lord will take on wicked men who had injured his people.

Hearken, ye peoples. In order to arouse them the more, he opens the address by this exclamation, as if he were about to discharge the office of a herald, and summon the nations to appear before the judgment-seat of God. It was necessary thus to shake off the listlessness of wicked men, who amidst ease and prosperity despise all threatenings, and do not think that God will take vengeance on their crimes. Yet amidst this vehemence he has his eye principally on the Church; for otherwise he would have spoken to the deaf, and without any advantage.

Let the earth hear. He addresses the Edomites who would haughtily despise these judgments, and therefore he calls heaven and earth to bear witness against them; for he declares that the judgment will be so visible and striking, that not only all the nations but even the dumb creatures shall behold it. It is customary with the prophets thus to address the dumb creatures, when men, though endued with reason and understanding, are stupid, as we have formerly seen. (Isaiah i. 2; Deut. xxxii. 1.)

2. *For the indignation of Jehovah is on all the nations.* He undoubtedly means "the nations" which were hostile to the Jews, and at the same time were contiguous to them; for, being surrounded on all sides by various nations, they

had almost as many enemies as neighbours. Though this hatred arose from other causes, such as envy, yet the diversity of religion very greatly inflamed their rage, for they were exceedingly offended at having their superstitions condemned. So much stronger was the reason why God promised that he would be a judge and avenger.

On all their army. This is added because the Jews were few in number when compared with the rest of the nations. Although, therefore, "the nations" were proud of their vast numbers, and despised the Jews because they were few, yet he declares that God will easily diminish and crush them, in order to preserve his little flock, of which he is the guardian.

He hath destroyed them. Though he speaks of future events, yet he chose to employ the past tense, in order to place the event immediately before the eyes of those who were lying low and overwhelmed with adversity. These predictions were made, as I briefly noticed a little before, not on account of the Edomites, who paid no regard to this doctrine, but for the sake of the godly, whom he wished to comfort, because they were wretchedly harassed by their enemies.

3. *Their slain shall be cast out.* By this circumstance he shews that it will be a great calamity, for if a few persons are "slain," they are committed to the earth; but when so great a multitude is slain at one time, that there are not left as many as are necessary for burying them, there is no thought of interment, and therefore the air is polluted by *the stench of their carcases.* Hence it is evident that God is sufficiently powerful to lay low innumerable armies. Perhaps, also, the Prophet intended to heighten the picture of the judgment of God, because to the slaughter of the nations there will be added shame and disgrace, so that they shall be deprived of the honour and duty of burial.

And the mountains shall melt on account of their blood. Another figure of speech is employed to shew more fully the extent of the slaughter, for the "blood" will flow from "the mountains," as if the very mountains were melted, just as when the waters run down violently after heavy showers,

and sweep away the soil along with them. Thus, also, he shews that there will be no means of escape, because the sword will rage as cruelly on the very mountains as on the field of battle.

4. *And all the armies of heaven shall fade away.* Isaiah employs an exaggerated style, as other prophets are accustomed to do, in order to represent vividly the dreadful nature of the judgment of God, and to make an impression on men's hearts that were dull and sluggish; for otherwise his discourse would have been deficient in energy, and would have had little influence on careless men. He therefore adds that "the stars" themselves, amidst such slaughter, shall gather blackness as if they were ready to faint, and he does so in order to shew more fully that it will be a mournful calamity. In like manner, as in a dark and troubled sky, the clouds appear to be folded together, the sun and stars to grow pale and, as it were, to faint, and all those heavenly bodies to totter and give tokens of ruin; he declares that thus will it happen at that time, and that everything shall be full of the saddest lamentation.

These statements must be understood to relate to men's apprehension, for heaven is not moved out of its place; but when the Lord gives manifestations of his anger, we are terrified as if the Lord folded up or threw down the heavens; not that anything of this kind takes place in heaven, but he speaks to careless men, who needed to be addressed in this manner, that they might not imagine the subject to be trivial or a fit subject of scorn. "You will be seized with such terror that you shall think that the sky is falling down on your heads." It is the just punishment of indifference, that wicked men, who are not moved by any fear of God, dread their own shadow, and tremble "at the rustling of a falling leaf," (Lev. xxvi. 36,) as much as if the sun were falling from heaven. Yet it also denotes a dreadful revolution of affairs, by which everything shall be subverted and disturbed.

5. *For my sword is made drunken in the heavens.* He says that the "sword" of the Lord is bloody, as extensive slaughter makes the "swords" wet with gore; and, in order to give greater weight to his style, he represents the Lord as

speaking. But why does he say that it is *in heaven?* for God does not call men to heaven to inflict punishment on them, but executes his judgments openly in the world, and by the hand of men.[1] Here the Prophet looks at the secret decree of God, by which he appoints and determines everything before it is executed; and he does not mean the act itself, but extols the efficacy of the prediction, because the certainty of the effect is manifest from the unchangeable purpose of God; that unbelievers may know that the Lord in heaven takes account of the crimes of wicked men, although for a time they may pursue their career of iniquity without being punished, and that, although they enjoy profound peace, still the sword by which they shall be slain is even now bloody in the sight of God, when he determines to inflict punishment on them. In like manner Sodom (Gen. xix. 28) was already burning in the sight of God, while it freely indulged in wine and feasting, and in satisfying its lust; and the same thing must be said of other wicked men, who, while they are wallowing in pleasures, are held as appointed by God to be slain. We ought not, therefore, to fix our attention on the present state when we see wicked men enjoy prosperity and do everything according to their wish. Though no one annoys them, still they are not far from destruction when God is angry with them and is their enemy.

So it shall come down on Edom. He expressly mentions the Edomites, who were hostile to the people of God, though related to them by blood, and distinguished by the same mark of religion; for they were, as we have formerly mentioned,[2] descended from Esau, (Gen. xxxvi. 8,) and were the posterity of Abraham. At the present day, in like manner, we have no enemies more deadly than the Papists, who have publicly received the same baptism with ourselves, and even profess Christ, and yet cruelly persecute and would wish

[1] "Nothing is more customary among Eastern poets than to employ a 'sword drunken with blood' to denote extensive slaughter. (Schurrer on Hab. iii. 9.) Or, perhaps, in this verse the sword in heaven ought rather to be understood to be drunk with the divine anger, before it is let down on the earth to be glutted with the blood of enemies; in which case the following verse would fitly describe that sword as glutted with blood in the land of the Edomites."—*Rosenmüller.*

[2] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. i. p. 393.

utterly to destroy us, because we condemn their superstitions and idolatry. Such were the Edomites, and therefore the Prophet has chiefly selected them out of the whole number of the enemies.

On the people of my curse. By giving them this appellation he confirms the sentence which he had pronounced, for in vain would they endeavour to escape that destruction to which they were already destined and devoted. By this term he declares that they are already destroyed by a decree of heaven, as if they had been already separated and cut off from the number of living men. That it may not be thought that God has done it unjustly, he adds, *to judgment;* for there is nothing to which men are more prone than to accuse God of cruelty, and the greater part of men are unwilling to acknowledge that he is a righteous judge, especially when he chastises with severity. Isaiah, therefore, shews that it is a just judgment, for God does nothing through cruelty or through excessive severity.

6. *The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood.* He follows out the same statement, but by a different description, which places the matter in a much stronger light, in order to shake off the drowsiness of wicked men, who are wont to laugh and scoff at all doctrine, as we have formerly remarked. It is therefore necessary that the judgments of God should be set forth as in a lively picture, that it may not only make a deep impression on their dull minds, but may encourage believers by holy confidence, when they learn that the pride and rebellion of their enemies cannot at all hinder them from being dragged like cattle to the slaughter, whenever it shall be the will of God.

He compares it to *sacrifices,* for animals are slain in sacrifice for the worship and honour of God, and in like manner the destruction of this people will also tend to the glory of God. And here he confirms what was formerly said about *judgment,* for when God executes his judgments, he shews forth his glory; so that the destruction of wicked men is justly compared to "sacrifices," which belonged to his worship. "Sacrifices," indeed, were undoubtedly not very pleasant and agreeable to behold, for the revolting act of taking

away life, the reeking blood, and the stench of the smoke, might have a repulsive effect; and yet in these things the honour of God shone brightly. Thus, also, this slaughter was hideous to behold, and little fitted to obtain regard; but believers, in order that they may hallow the name of God in this respect, are commanded to lift up their eyes to heaven; because, in executing such punishment, God erects altars to himself for slaying sacrifices. Because they unjustly oppressed the Church of God, and, forgetful of all humane feelings, treated the children of God with cruelty, Isaiah declares that in their blood is offered a sacrifice of sweet savour, and highly acceptable to God, because he executes his judgment.

With the blood of lambs and of goats. Under this appellation he describes metaphorically the people that were to be slain, and, alluding to the various kinds of victims, includes not only all men of ordinary rank, but all the nobles, in order to intimate that the Lord will punish his enemies in such a manner that no man of any class whatever shall be exempted. He mentions *Bozrah*, the chief city and metropolis, as it were, of the nation, where the greatest slaughter shall take place; and next, he adds, the country of *Edom*, through the whole of which this calamity shall take its course.[1]

7. *And the unicorns shall come down with them.* This verse is closely connected with the former, for he adds nothing new, but proceeds with the same figure, amplifying what he had said about "rams" and "goats," to which he adds not only *bullocks* but wild and savage beasts. It amounts to this, that the vengeance of heaven will be so unrelenting as to spare neither age nor rank, and to mark for slaughter even cruel giants, notwithstanding their silly fierceness, just as if one were preparing a sacrifice which consisted indiscriminately of every kind of animals. It ought not to be thought strange that lambs are mingled with cruel beasts, for the term "lambs" is not employed in commendation of their

[1] "Au travers de la quelle ceste desconfiture passera sans espargner endroit quelconque." "Across which this overthrow shall pass without sparing any place whatever."

mildness or harmlessness, but is applied comparatively to those who are feeble and who belong to the ordinary rank, which lays them under the necessity of having some appearance of modesty.

Although God may appear to be harsh in thus directing his hostility against all classes, yet, by the use of the word "sacrifice," he claims for himself the praise of justice; and indeed no man, when he comes to the trial, will be found to be without blame, so that on good grounds all, without exception, are irrecoverably ruined. Such is the destruction which awaits all the reprobate, who of their own accord refuse to devote themselves to the service of God; irreligious hands shall offer them in sacrifice.[1]

אבּרים (*ăbbīrīm*) is translated *strong* by some commentators; I have preferred to follow those who explain it to mean *bulls*, which it means also in Ps. l. 13, though in this passage the Prophet employs the word *bulls* to denote metaphorically those who are very strong and powerful.

8. *For it is the day of vengeance of Jehovah.* This verse must be viewed as closely connected with the preceding verses, for it points out the object which the Lord has in view in punishing the Edomites with such severity; and that object is, that he wishes to avenge his people and defend their cause. If, therefore, he had not also assigned this reason, the former statements might have appeared to be obscure or inappropriate; for it would have been an uncertain kind of knowledge if we did not consider that God, in punishing wicked men, testifies his unceasing affection and care to preserve his own people.

What was formerly said about the Edomites must undoubtedly be extended to the enemies of the Church, for all of them were included by the Prophet under a particular class; and, therefore, in adversity our hearts ought to be supported by this consolation, that the attacks which we now suffer shall come into judgment before God, who justly claims for himself this office. The Prophet does not only mean that it is in his power to punish wicked men whenever

[1] "Ils seront sacrifiez par les mains d'aussi mechans qu'eux." "They shall be sacrificed by the hands of persons as wicked as themselves."

he thinks proper, but that he reigns in heaven, in order to punish every kind of injustice at the proper time.

But we must attend to the words *day* and *year*, by which he reminds us that God does not sleep in heaven, though for a little time he does not come forth, but delays his vengeance till a fit season, that believers may in the meantime "possess their souls in patience," (Luke xxi. 19,) and may leave him to govern according to his inscrutable wisdom.

9. *And its streams shall be turned into pitch.* What the Prophet now adds contains nothing new, but describes more fully this desolation. We have formerly explained the reason why the prophets employ these lively pictures in representing the judgments of God. It is for the purpose of leading men to view them as actually present, and of compelling them to acknowledge those things which their eyes and minds do not discern, or which, as soon as they are beheld and known, are immediately forgotten. But it ought also to be observed that the Prophets spoke of things which were dark and secret, and which were generally thought to be incredible; for many persons imagined that the Prophets uttered them at random. It was, therefore, necessary to add many confirmations, such as those which he employs in this and in other passages; and thus he denotes a horrible change, which shall destroy the whole face of Judea.

Moreover, he alludes to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, (Gen. xix. 24,) as the prophets very frequently do. In that destruction, as Jude informs us, we have a perpetual representation of the wrath of God against the reprobate, (Jude 7;) and it is not without good reason that the prophets call it to our remembrance, that all may learn to dread the judgments of God. To the same purpose is what he adds,—

10. *By night and by day it shall not be quenched.* The Prophet's language is undoubtedly hyperbolical; but the Lord is compelled to act towards us in this manner, for otherwise plain words would produce no impression on us. When he declares that the wrath of God against the Edomites will resemble a fire that burns continually, he cuts off from them all hope of pardon, because, having never ceased

to provoke God, they find that he is implacable; and Malachi also pronounces this expression of reprobation, that the curse of God will for ever rest on that nation. (Mal. i. 4.) The contrast must be supplied, because some mitigation is always held out to the people of God for their comfort. But this does not need a lengthened interpretation. It is enough that we understand the meaning and design of the Prophet.

11. *Therefore the pelican and the owl shall possess it.* As to these animals there are various opinions, and Hebrew commentators are not agreed about them; but the design of the Prophet is evident, which is, to describe a desert place and an extensive wilderness. He undoubtedly mentions dreadful beasts and hideous monsters, which do not dwell with men, and are not generally known by them, in order to shew more fully how shocking will be this desolation. The former clause therefore is plain enough, but the latter is attended by some difficulty.

He shall stretch over it the cord of emptiness. Some view the phrase "an empty cord" as bearing an opposite sense, and apply it to the Jews; but I take a more simple view, and think that, like all the preceding statements, it must relate to the Edomites. And to make it more clear that this is Isaiah's natural meaning, we read the same word in the Prophet Malachi, who lived a long time afterwards. That passage may be regarded as an approbation of this prophecy. "If Edom shall say, We have been diminished, we shall therefore return and rebuild the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of Hosts, They shall indeed build, but I shall pull down, and they shall call them the borders of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord is angry for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, Let the Lord be magnified on the borders of Israel." (Mal. i. 4, 5.) What Isaiah had foretold more obscurely, Malachi explains with greater clearness. The latter declares that "the Edomites shall build in vain," and the former that "they shall stretch an empty cord." As if he had said, "In vain shall the master-builders bestow their exertions on rebuilding the cities;" for builders make use of cords and plummets in all

their measurements. He therefore shews that the efforts of those who shall intend to restore the land of Edom will be fruitless; for his meaning is, that they shall be destroyed in such a manner that they cannot at all recover from that destruction, though God usually alleviates other calamities by some consolation.

And hence we ought to draw a very profitable doctrine, that when cities are in some measure restored after having been thrown down, this arises from the distinguished kindness of God; for the efforts of builders or workmen will be unavailing, if he do not put his hand both to laying the foundation and to carrying forward the work. Fruitless and unprofitable also will their work be, if he do not conduct it to the conclusion, and afterwards take it under his guardianship. In vain shall men bestow great expense, and make every possible exertion, if he do not watch over and bless the work. It is only by the blessing of God, therefore, that we obtain any success; and hence also it is said that "his hands have built Jerusalem." (Ps. cxlvii. 2; Is. xiv. 32.) What Isaiah threatens in this passage against the Edomites, the Holy Spirit elsewhere declares as to the house of Ahab, meaning that it shall be razed to the very foundation. (2 Kings xxi. 13.)

12. *They shall call her nobles without a kingdom.* This passage has received various interpretations, which I do not quote, because it would be tedious to refute them. One of the most probable is, "They shall call his nobles to reign, but in vain." As if he had said, "In their wretched condition none will be found willing to rule over them, and to undertake the charge of the commonwealth." A statement of the same kind is found elsewhere, and we have formerly (Is. iii. 6, 7) seen one that is almost alike; but the words do not correspond. When the Prophet speaks thus, "They shall call her nobles, and they shall not be there," he employs, I doubt not, witty raillery to censure the pride of that nation which had been cherished by long-continued peace and abundance. When the Edomites, therefore, out of their mountains breathed lofty pride, the Prophet declares that they shall be disgracefully cast down, so that they shall have

no nobility and no government; just as, when a kingdom has been overturned, government is taken away, so that the general mass of the people resembles a maimed or disfigured body, and there is no distinction of ranks. To those stately nobles who vaunted themselves so much, he says in mockery, that they shall be princes without subjects.

And all her princes shall be nothing. The meaning of the former clause is still more evident from this second clause, in which he adds for the sake of explanation, that her princes "shall be reduced to nothing." It amounts to this, that the land of Edom shall resemble a mutilated body, so that nothing shall be seen in it but shocking confusion. This is the utmost curse of God; because, if men have no political government, they will hardly differ at all from beasts. Indeed, their condition will be far worse, for beasts can dispense with a governor, because they do not make war against their own kind; but nothing can be more cruel than man, if he be not held by some restraint, for every one will be driven by the furious eagerness of his own passions to every kind of vicious indulgence.

13. *In her palaces she shall bring forth thorns.* He pursues the same subject; for he describes a frightful desolation, by which splendid houses and palaces are levelled to the ground, or reduced to a state so wild that they are of no use to men, but produce only *briers, thorns,* and *nettles;* which is more disgraceful than if they had been turned into fields and meadows. In this manner does the Lord punish the insolence of those who built lofty and magnificent houses and costly palaces, that the remembrance of them might be handed down to the latest posterity. Having banished men, he turns those dwellings into nests of birds and dens of wild beasts, that, instead of being, as they expected, the trophies of their name and renown, they may stand as monuments of foolish ambition. Thus the place of men is nearly supplied by beasts, which represent the dispositions of those who reared those goodly edifices. This overthrow of order is likewise a sad token of the wrath of God, when the earth, which was created for the use of man, beholds its natural lords banished, and is compelled to admit other inhabitants;

for then, undoubtedly, it is cleansed from the defilements with which it was polluted.

14. *And the wild beasts shall meet with the satyrs.*[1] These animals are thought by some commentators to mean fauns, by others screech-owls or goblins, and by others satyrs; and it is not fully agreed what is the exact meaning of the Hebrew words; but it would serve no good purpose to give ourselves much uneasiness about them, for it is quite enough if we understand the meaning and design of the Prophet. He draws a picture of frightful desolation, as if he had said that Idumea shall be destroyed so as to be without inhabitants, and instead of men it shall be inhabited by frightful beasts. This reward is most justly reaped by the ambition of those who built costly palaces to be, as we have already said, monuments of their name and reputation. Yet this is also a punishment threatened against the cruelty of a wicked nation, which was eagerly bent on the oppression of neighbours and brethren.

Though we cannot absolutely determine whether the Prophet means witches, or goblins, or satyrs and fauns, yet it is universally agreed that these words denote animals which have the shape of men. We see also what various delusions are practised by Satan, what phantoms and hideous monsters are seen, and what sounds and noises are heard. But of these we have already spoken under the thirteenth chapter.[2]

The sin which God punished so severely in a single nation, is common to almost every nation; for hardly ever are those splendid buildings reared without committing much violence and injustice against the poor, and giving great and numerous annoyances to others; so that the lime, and stones, and timber, are filled with blood in the sight of God. Therefore, as Habakkuk says, "the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall bear witness to it." (Hab. ii. 11.) Let us not wonder, therefore, at those dreadful changes, when ambition lays hold on plunder and wicked

[1] "Les bestes sauvages (assavoir Ziim avec Iim,) s'y rencontreront." "The wild beasts (that is, the Ziim with the Iim) shall meet there."

[2] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. i. p. 429.

extortions, but let us contemplate the righteous judgments of God.

16. *Inquire at the book of Jehovah.* By "the book of the Lord" some understand this prophecy, as if he had enjoined them to read attentively this prediction; for not even in the minutest point will it fail at the appointed time, as he will afterwards add. Others explain it more ingeniously as denoting the eternal decree of God; "inquire if such be not the purpose of God;" but this exposition is not sufficiently natural. I willingly interpret it as denoting the Law itself, which by way of eminence is called "the book of the Lord;" for from the Law, as from its source, the Prophets drew their doctrine, as we have frequently remarked.

Lest the strangeness of the event should prevent the prediction from being believed, Isaiah says that the Jews had been warned of it long before; and thus he indirectly censures the unbelief of those who stared at the announcement, as if it had been something uncommon. He appropriately brings them back to the Law, in which God frequently declares that he will take care of his people, and that he will punish the wicked and reprobate. Moses having long ago spoken in this manner, the Prophet says that there is no reason why it should be difficult to believe what he foretells, since he brings forward nothing new, but only confirms now what Moses declared and testified. Such appears to me to be the natural meaning of the Prophet, and by these words he intended to fortify the Jews, patiently to look for what the Lord promised, and fully to believe that all that had been foretold about the Edomites and the other adversaries of the Church would at length be actually fulfilled, since Moses was a credible witness, that God would always be the avenger of his people. Besides, it was proper that they should be reminded of this, in order that, when these things should befall the Edomites, they might not think that they had happened by chance, but might know that they were brought about by the judgment of God. Such is the rebellion of men, that they do not believe God when he forewarns them, and what afterwards takes place by the judgment of God is ascribed by them to fortune. Isaiah therefore

meets this, and bids them inquire at Moses, whose authority they all revered.

Not one of those; that is, of the animals; for the Hebrew writers employ these terms, אִישׁ (*ĭsh*) and אִשָּׁה, (*ĭshshāh*,) not only for men and women, but for males and females of any species.

For his mouth hath commanded. He confirms what he formerly said; for although the works of God are sufficiently plain, yet by *his mouth*, that is, by the word, he makes them plainer to us, that we may see them more clearly. And this is the true contemplation of the works of God, when we keep our eye fixed on the mirror of the word; for otherwise our boldness is carried to excess, and we take greater liberty than is proper, if heavenly doctrine do not guide us like a lamp. This ought therefore to restrain the boldness and rashness of men, who, despising the doctrine of the word, wish to dispute and form opinions about the judgments of God and all his works. If they "inquired at the book," and asked at the mouth of the Lord, we should see greater piety and religion among them.

Yet by "the mouth of the Lord" the Prophet intended to confirm the vengeance which he had foretold, because nothing that has come out of God's holy mouth can fail of its effect. Isaiah affirms that what God has once decreed, and published in his own name, cannot be reversed. By this shield he thus wards off all the doubts which quickly arise, whenever the promises of God go beyond our senses. Sometimes, indeed, he threatens conditionally, as he threatened the Ninevites, (Jonah i. 2,) Pharaoh, (Gen. xii. 17,) and Abimelech, (Gen. xx. 3,) whom he spared, because they repented; but when he has once determined to revenge and punish, he gives actual proof that he is not less true and powerful than when he promised salvation to his people. The agreement of the words *Mouth* and *Spirit* makes it still more evident.

And his Spirit hath gathered them. Although "the breath of the mouth" often means the same thing as "speech," and although it is customary with the Hebrew writers to repeat the same thing twice, yet here he alludes elegantly to the breath, from which the words proceed, and by which they

are formed; as if he had said that this prediction is abundantly powerful, because the same God who by his voice commanded the brute animals to possess the land of Edom, will bring them by merely breathing. He speaks of a secret influence; and we ought not to wonder that the slightest expression of the will of God causes all the animals to assemble, as happened at the flood, (Gen. vii. 15,) and likewise at the very creation of the world, when, as Moses relates, all the animals were gathered together, by the command of God, to the first man, that they might be subject to his authority. (Gen. ii. 19.) And undoubtedly they would have continued to be subject and obedient to him, had not his own rebellion deprived him of that power and authority; but when he revolted from God, the animals at the same time began to refuse subjection and to attack him.

17. *And he hath cast the lot for them.* He says that to those wild beasts and monsters there hath been granted a secure and permanent habitation, from which they cannot be easily banished or driven out; because God hath allotted it to them as their portion by inheritance. This means that the whole of Idumea is at the disposal of the Lord, to drive out the inhabitants, and to grant possession of it to whomsoever he pleases, either wild beasts, or birds, or monsters.

Hence infer that it is vain for men ever to promise themselves a permanent abode, unless so far as every person has obtained his place "by lot," and on the express condition that he shall instantly leave it, whenever God calls. We lead a dependent life wherever he supports us; and either on our native soil, or at a distance from our fatherland, we are strangers. If he shall be pleased to give us a peaceable habitation for a long time in one place, it will only be by his special favour that we shall dwell there; and as soon as he thinks proper, he will constrain us to change our abode. Besides, if we acknowledge that a residence in this or that country has been appointed to us by God, we may dwell in it with safety and composure; for if he keeps wild beasts in possession of the place which he has allotted to them, how much more will he preserve men, for whose sake he created heaven, earth, the seas, and all that they contain?

CHAPTER XXXV.

1. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

2. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, *and* the excellency of our God.

3. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

4. Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with* a recompence; he will come and save you.

5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped:

6. Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

7. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall be* grass, with reeds and rushes.

8. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein.*

9. No lion shall be there, nor *any* ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk *there.*

10. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

1. Lætabuntur solitudo et desertum; exultabit locus squalidus, et florebit quasi lilium.

2. Florens florebit, et exultabit adhuc (*vel, etiam*) exultatione, atque jubilabit; gloria Libani dabitur ei, decor Carmel et Saron. Ipsi videbunt gloriam Iehovæ, majestatem Dei nostri.

3. Confortate manus remissas, genua labantia roborate.

4. Dicite eis qui trepidi sunt corde: confortemini, ne timeatis. Ecce Deus vester cum ultione veniet; cum retributione Deus (*vel, Dei*) ipse veniet, et salvabit nos.

5. Tunc aperientur oculi cæcorum, et aures surdorum aperientur.

6. Tunc saliet instar cervi claudus, clare personabit lingua muti; quoniam effodientur in deserto aquæ, et flumina in solitudine.

7. Vertetur locus aridus in stagnum, et regio siticulosa in scaturigines aquarum; in habitaculo draconum, cubili, inquam, ejus locus erit arundini et junco.

8. Et erit illic semita et via, et via sancta vocabitur. Per eam non transibit immundus; et erit illis ambulans in via, ut stulti non errent.

9. Non erit illic leo, nec fera bestia ascendet per eam, neque ibi invenietur, ut redempti ambulent.

10. Itaque redempti Jehovæ redibunt, et venient in Sion cum exultatione; et gaudium perpetuum erit super caput eorum; et apprehendent gaudium et lætitiam, fugientque tristitia et gemitus.

1. *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad.* Here the Prophet describes a wonderful change; for having

in the former chapter described the destruction of Idumæa, and having said that it would be changed into a wilderness, he now promises, on the other hand, fertility to the wilderness, so that barren and waste lands shall become highly productive. This is God's own work; for, as he blesses the whole earth, so he waters some parts of it more lightly, and other parts more bountifully, by his blessing, and afterwards withdraws and removes it altogether on account of the ingratitude of men.

This passage is explained in various ways. I pass by the dreams of the Jews, who apply all passages of this kind to the temporal reign of the Messiah, which they have contrived by their own imagination. Some explain it as referring to Judea, and others to the calling of the Gentiles. But let us see if it be not more proper to include the whole world along with Judea; for he predicted the destruction of the whole world in such terms as not to spare Judea, and not only so, but because "the judgment of God begins at his house or sanctuary," (1 Peter iv. 17,) the singularly melancholy desolation of the Holy Land was foretold, that it might be a remarkable example. Thus beginning appropriately and justly with Judea, he calls the whole world a *wilderness*, because everywhere the wrath of God abounded; and, therefore, I willingly view this passage as referring to Judea, and afterwards to the other parts of the world. As if he had said, "After the Lord shall have punished the wickedness and crimes of men, and taken vengeance on Jews and Gentiles, the wilderness shall then be changed into a habitable country, and the face of the whole earth shall be renewed." Now this restoration is a remarkable instance of the goodness of God; for, when men have provoked him by their revolt, they deserve to perish altogether, and to be utterly destroyed, especially they whom he has adopted to be his peculiar people. Isaiah has his eye chiefly on the Jews, that in their distressful condition they may not faint.

Let us now see when this prophecy was fulfilled, or when it shall be fulfilled. The Lord began some kind of restoration when he brought his people out of Babylon; but that was only a slight foretaste, and, therefore, I have no hesita-

tion in saying that this passage, as well as others of a similar kind, must refer to the kingdom of Christ; and in no other light could it be viewed, if we compare it to other prophecies. By "the kingdom of Christ," I mean not only that which is begun here, but that which shall be completed at the last day, which on that account is called "the day of renovation and restoration," (Acts iii. 21;) because believers will never find perfect rest till that day arrive. And the reason why the prophets speak of the kingdom of Christ in such lofty terms is, that they look at that end when the true happiness of believers shall be most fully restored.

After having spoken of dreadful calamities and predicted the lamentable ruin of the whole world, the Prophet comforts believers by this promise, in which he foretells that all things shall be restored. This is done by Christ, by whom alone they can be renewed and made glad; for he alone renews everything, and restores it to proper order; apart from him there can be nothing but filth and desolation, nothing but most miserable ruin both in heaven and in earth. But it ought to be carefully observed, that the world needed to be prepared by chastisements of this nature, in order that it might be fit and qualified for receiving such distinguished favour, and that the grace of Christ might be more fully manifested, which would have been concealed if everything had remained in its original state. It was therefore necessary that the proud and fierce minds of men should be cast down and subdued, that they might taste the kindness of Christ, and partake of his power and strength.

2. *Flourishing it shall flourish.* He describes more fully how great will be the effect of the grace of Christ, by whose power and might those places which had been overgrown with filthy and noxious weeds "flourish" exceedingly and regain their vigour. This repetition is used for the sake of amplification. The doubling of the word "flourish" may be taken in two senses; either to denote the prolongation of time in incessant vegetation; as if he had said, "It shall not flourish with a passing or fading blossom, so as to return immediately to the foul condition in which it once was, but with a continual, uninterrupted, and long-continued bloom,

which can never fade or pass away;" or to denote the increase and daily or yearly progress of improvement; for Christ enriches us in such a manner as to increase his grace in us from day to day.

The glory of Lebanon, the beauty of Carmel and Sharon. These metaphors display more fully the fertility already described; for the Prophet is not satisfied with saying that where formerly there was a gloomy wilderness smiling fields will be seen, and that dry places will be clothed with the beauty of flowers, but adds that there will be such luxuriant beauty as "Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon" were celebrated for possessing. Though *Carmel* denotes a cultivated and fertile field, yet here it is a proper name, like the other two. We have seen in other passages[1] that these mountains were highly celebrated, and throughout the whole of Judea held the undisputed pre-eminence both for delightfulness and for abundance of fruits.

They shall see the glory of Jehovah. What he had formerly spoken metaphorically he now explains clearly and without a figure. Till men learn to know God, they are barren and destitute of everything good; and consequently the beginning of our fertility is to be quickened by the presence of God, which cannot be without the inward perception of faith. The Prophet undoubtedly intended to raise our minds higher, that we may contemplate the abundance and copiousness of heavenly benefits; for men might be satisfied with bread and wine and other things of the same kind, and yet not acknowledge God to be the author of them, or cease to be wretched; and indeed men are often blinded and rendered more fierce by enjoying abundance. But when God makes himself visible to us, by causing us to behold *his glory and beauty*, we not only possess his blessings, but have the true enjoyment of them for salvation.

3. *Strengthen ye the weak hands.* We might explain this passage generally, as if he had said, "Let those who have feeble hands strengthen them, let them whose knees tremble and totter compose and invigorate their hearts." But the following verse shews that the whole of this passage relates

[1] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. ii. pp. 330 and 420.

to the ministers of the word; for he addresses the teachers of the Church, and enjoins them to exhort, arouse, and encourage weak men whose hearts are broken or cast down, that they may be rendered more firm and cheerful. This exhortation is seasonably introduced, because he saw that so many tokens of God's anger, of which he had spoken, could not do otherwise than fill even the strongest minds with alarm and dread; for, seeing that we are always enfeebled by adversity, when God himself proclaims what may be called open war against us on account of our sins, who would not tremble? But the Prophet commands that they who are cast down and almost lifeless shall be enlivened, and the manner of doing it is explained by him in the following verse.

4. *Say to them that are faint hearted.* That strength of which he spoke is breathed into our hearts by God through his word, as "by faith alone we stand" (2 Cor. i. 24) and live; and therefore he adds the promise of grace yet to come.

Behold, your God will come. First, it ought to be observed that God does not wish that his grace should remain concealed and unknown, but rather that it should be proclaimed and imparted, that they who totter and tremble may compose and invigorate their hearts. And this is one method by which our hearts may be cheered amidst heavy distresses; for if we are not supported by the word of the Lord, we must faint and despair. This, then, is the office assigned to the teachers of the word, to raise up them that are fallen down, to strengthen the feeble, to uphold the tottering.

We ought also to observe how great is the efficacy of the word in "invigorating the feeble hands and strengthening the tottering knees;" for if it had not been a powerful instrument in communicating this strength, the Prophet would never have spoken in this manner; and, indeed, if God struck only our ears by his word, and did not pierce our hearts, these words would have been spoken in vain. Since, therefore, the Lord assigns this office to the word, let us

[1] "Fortifier ceux qui sont prests a tomber." "To support those who are ready to fall."

know that he also imparts this power to it, that it may not be spoken in vain, but may inwardly move our hearts, not always indeed or indiscriminately, but where it pleases God by the secret power of his Spirit to work in this manner. And hence we infer that the same word makes us disposed to obey him; for otherwise we shall be indolent and stupid; all our senses shall fail, and we shall not only waver, but shall be altogether stupified by unbelief. We, therefore, need to receive aid from the Lord, that the removal of our fear and the cure of our weakness may enable us to walk with agility.

Fear not; behold, your God will come. This warning deeply fixed in our minds will banish slothfulness. As soon as men perceive that God is near them, they either cease to fear, or at least rise superior to excessive terror. "Be not anxious," says Paul, "for the Lord is at hand." (Phil. iv. 5, 6.) On this subject we have spoken largely on other occasions; and the Apostle to the Hebrews appears to allude to this passage, when, after having charged them not to be wearied and faint-hearted, he quotes the words of the Prophet. (Heb. xii. 3, 12.) Yet he directs this discourse to every believer, that they may be excited to perseverance, and because they have many struggles to maintain, may advance steadfastly in their journey. Nor is it superfluous that he adds *your God;* for if we do not know that he is *our* God, his approach will produce terror, instead of giving cause of joy. Not the majesty of God, which is fitted to humble the pride of the flesh, but his grace, which is fitted to comfort the fearful and distressed, is here exhibited; and, therefore, it is not without reason that he is represented as a guardian, to shield them by his protection.

If it be objected that he brings terror when he comes to take vengeance, I reply that this vengeance is threatened against wicked men and enemies of the Church. To the latter, therefore, he will be a terror, but to believers he will be a consolation; and accordingly he adds that he will come to save them, because otherwise it might be objected, "What is it to us if our enemies be punished? What good does it do to us? Must we take delight in the distresses of ene-

mies?" Thus he expressly declares that it will promote our "salvation;" for the vengeance which God takes on wicked men is connected with the salvation of the godly. In what manner the godly are delivered from anxiety and dread by the favour of God and by the expectation of his aid, has been explained at a former passage.[1] (Isa. vii. 4.) At present it ought to be observed, that God is prepared and armed with vengeance, that believers may learn to lean on his aid, and not to fancy some deity unemployed in heaven. Such is also the object of the repetition of the words, "he will come;" because distrust is not all at once banished from the hearts of men.

The end of the verse may either be rendered, *God himself will come with a recompense,* or *He will come with the recompense of God;* but as the meaning is the same, the reader may make his choice. Yet if it be thought preferable to view אלהים (*ĕlōhīm*) as in the genitive case, "*of God,*" then by "the recompense of God" is emphatically meant that which belongs peculiarly to God, that believers may be fully convinced that he is a "rewarder" as truly as he is God.[2]

5. *Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened.*[3] He continues the promise about the restoration of the Church, in order to encourage the hearts of the godly, who must have been grievously dismayed by the frightful calamities which he foretold. Since a true restoration is accomplished by Christ, we must therefore come to him, if we wish to know the meaning of the words which Isaiah employs in this passage; and indeed it is only by his kindness that we rise again to

[1] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. i. p. 232.

[2] "Vengeance shall come. The meaning is the same as if he had said, 'God will come in vengeance, or as an avenger.' Again, the retribution of God shall come against your enemies and deliver you."—*Jarchi.* "The construction of the second clause is greatly perplexed by making אלהים (*ĕlōhīm*) the subject of יבוא (*yābō.*) The true construction as given by Junius, Cocceius, Vitringa, and most later writers, makes *behold your God* an exclamation, and vengeance the subject of the verb."—*Alexander.*

[3] "That is," says Jarchi, "who have hitherto been blind so as not to know the reverence (or fear) of me upon them." Or, as explained by his annotator Breithaupt, "Who have hitherto shaken off the yoke of the fear of God, and have not manifested the reverence that is due to God."

the hope of a heavenly life. Isaiah probably alludes to a former prediction, (Is. xxix. 10,) in which he threatened against the Jews dreadful blindness, madness, and total stupefaction of the soul. He now promises that, when Christ shall shine forth, those senses of which they were deprived for a time shall be renovated and brightened to a new life. There is weight in the adverb *Then;* for we ought to infer from it that, so long as we are alienated from Christ, we are dumb, blind, and lame, and, in short, that we are destitute of all ability to do what is good, but that we are renewed by the Spirit of Christ, so as to enjoy real health.

By the *tongue* and *ears* and *feet* he means all the faculties of our soul, which in themselves are so corrupt that nothing that is good can be obtained from them till they are restored by the kindness of Christ. The eyes cannot see what is right, and the ears cannot hear, and the feet cannot guide us in the right way, till we are united to Christ. Though the senses of men are abundantly acute wherever they are impelled by sinful passions; though the tongue is eloquent for slander, perjury, lying, and every kind of foolish speaking; though the hands are too ready for thefts, extortions, and cruelty; though the feet are swift to do injury; and, in short, though the whole of our nature is not only willing but strongly bent on doing what is evil; yet we are altogether slothful and dull to do what is good, and therefore every part of us must be created anew by the power of Christ, that it may begin to understand aright, to feel, to speak, and to perform its offices; for "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 3.)

This renewal proceeds from the grace of Christ alone, and, therefore, sound strength is regained by those who are converted to Christ, and who formerly were in all respects useless, and resembled dead men; for, while we are separated from Christ, we either are destitute of everything that is good, or it is so greatly corrupted in us, that it cannot be applied to its proper use, but on the contrary is polluted by being abused. Christ gave abundant proofs and examples of this, when he restored speech to the dumb, eyes to the blind,

and perfect strength to the feeble and lame; but what he bestowed on their bodies was only a token of the far more abundant and excellent blessings which he imparts to our souls.

6. *For waters shall be dug.* He next adds other blessings with which believers shall be copiously supplied, as soon as the kingdom of Christ is set up; as if he had said, that there will be no reason to dread scarcity or want, when we have been reconciled to God through Christ, because perfect happiness flows to us from him. But he represents this happiness to us under metaphorical expressions; and, first, he says that "waters shall be dug;" because, where formerly all was barren, there the highest fertility shall be found. Now, we are poor and barren, unless God bless us through Christ; for he alone brings with him the blessing of the Father, which he bestows upon us. Wicked men, indeed, have often a great abundance of good things, but their wealth is wretched; for they have not Christ, from whom alone proceeds a true and salutary abundance of all blessings. Death unquestionably would be more desirable than that abundance of wine and of food with which we, at the same time, swallow the curse of God. When, therefore, Christ shall gloriously arise, rivers and waters shall flow out and yield true and valuable advantage.

7. *The dry place shall be changed into a pool.* He confirms the former statement, that Christ will come in order to enrich his people with all abundance of blessings; for waters shall flow out of "dry places."[1] We must keep in remem-

[1] "Instead of the general meaning put upon שָׁרָב, (*shārāb,*) by the older writers following the Septuagint (ἄνυδρος) and the Vulgate (*quæ erat arida*), it is now agreed that the word denotes the illusive appearance caused by the unequal refraction in the lower strata of the atmosphere, and often witnessed both at sea and land, called in English, *looming,* in Italian, *fata morgana,* and in French, *mirage.* In the deserts of Arabia and Africa, the appearance presented is precisely that of an extensive sheet of water, tending not only to mislead the traveller, but to aggravate his thirst by disappointment. The phenomenon is well described by Quintus Curtius, in his Life of Alexander the Great."—*Alexander.* The same view is given by Vitringa, who speaks of it as held by other learned men, and illustrates it very happily. It is also maintained by Rosenmüller, who supports it by curious and instructive extracts from Arabic scholiasts, and from the Koran, and by a host of other authorities.—*Ed.*

brance what we mentioned a little before, that the Prophet delineates to us what may be called a picture of a happy life; for although this change was not openly visible at the coming of Christ, yet with good reason does the Prophet affirm that, during his reign, the whole earth shall be fruitful; for he had formerly said that without Christ all things are cursed to us.

In the habitation of dragons. The whole world, therefore, shall resemble a parched wilderness, in which lions, "dragons," and other wild beasts prowl, till the kingdom of Christ shall be set up; and, on the other hand, when he is established on his throne, the godly shall lack nothing. An instance of this was given, when the Lord delivered his people and brought them out of Babylon; but the accomplishment of this prophecy must be looked for in Christ, through whom their ruinous condition is amended and restored; for that deliverance was but a feeble representation of it. And yet the full accomplishment of this promise ought not to be expected in the present life; for as it is through hope that we are blessed, (Rom. viii. 24,) so our happiness, which is now in some respects concealed, must be an object of hope till the last day; and it is enough that some taste of it be enjoyed in this world, that we may more ardently long for that perfect happiness.

8. *And a path shall be there.* Here it is promised to the Jews that they shall be allowed to return to their native country, lest, when they were carried into Babylon, they should think that they were led into perpetual banishment. Yet this statement is, in my opinion, extended much farther by the Prophet; for, as he promised a little before, that there would be plenty and abundance of provisions where there had been barrenness, so now he says that those places where formerly no man dwelt shall be occupied with the journeys and habitations of a vast multitude of men; and, in short, that the whole of Judea shall enjoy such harmony and peace with other countries, that men shall pass from the one country to the other without fear; for where there are no inhabitants, there can be no intercourse and no roads. He therefore means that the Jews will carry on intercourse

and merchandise with other nations, after having been brought back and restored to their own land.

And it shall be called, The holy way. Not without reason does the Prophet add that "the way shall be holy;" for wherever there is a great multitude of men, innumerable vices and corruptions abound. What else is done by a crowd of men than to pollute the land by infecting each other with mutual contagion? The Prophet therefore means that not only the earth, but also the minds of men are renewed by the kindness of Christ, so that they sanctify the earth which they formerly were wont to corrupt by their pollution. Yet what I stated briefly ought to be remembered, that the Jews, to whom the way shall be consecrated, will return to their native country, that they may worship their Redeemer in it in a holy manner; as if he had said that the land will be cleansed from the disgraceful rabble of a wicked people, that it may be inhabited by the true worshippers of God.

The unclean person shall not pass through it. He now adds a more full explanation; for polluted persons shall not tread the land which God hath set apart for his children; as if he had said, that the Lord will separate believers in such a manner that they shall not be mingled with the reprobate. This ought, unquestionably, to be reckoned among the most valuable blessings of the Church; but it is not fulfilled in this life; for both despisers of God and hypocrites rush indiscriminately into the Church and hold a place there. Yet some evidence of this grace becomes visible, whenever God, by various methods, cleanses his Church; but the full cleansing of it must be expected at the last day. Even the worshippers of God, whom he has regenerated by his Spirit, are attended by much uncleanness. Though they have been sanctified by God, yet their holiness cannot be perfect; their flesh is not wholly dead, but subdued and restrained so as to obey the Spirit. Now, it is because the Lord reigns in them, and subdues their natural dispositions, that, on account of that part of them which is the most important, they are called Saints.

And he shall be to them one that walketh in the way. This clause has been tortured in various ways by commentators.

Some render it "This shall be their road; they who have been used to the road, and they who are unacquainted with it, shall not go astray." Others render it, "This shall be the road for the children of Israel, and they who walk shall not go astray, though they be unacquainted with it." But the demonstrative pronoun הוּא, (*hū*,) *he*, is more correctly, in my opinion, viewed as referring to God; as if he had said, that God will go before them to lead and direct the way. And the context absolutely demands it; for it would not be enough to have the way opened up, if God did not go before to guide his people. The Prophet therefore extols this inestimable kindness, when he represents God as journeying along with his people; for, if he do not point out the road, our feet will always lead us astray, for we are wholly inclined to vanity. Besides, though the road be at hand, and though it be plain before our eyes, yet we shall not be able to distinguish it from the wrong road, and if we begin to walk in it, our folly will quickly lead us off on the right hand or on the left. But the Prophet shews that we shall be in no danger of going astray, when we shall follow God as the leader of the way; for he condescends to perform this office; and he probably alludes to the history of the first redemption, for at that time God directed his people "by means of a cloud by day, and of a pillar of fire by night." (Exod. xiii. 21.) At the same time he points out how necessary it is that God should govern us, in directly laying folly to our charge, when he adds—

Fools shall not go astray; for they who are wise in their own eyes, and who rely on their own guidance, will be permitted by God to wander in uncertain courses; and therefore, if we wish that he should walk along with us, let us know that we need his guidance. Yet he offers us this most excellent reward, that they who follow him, even though they did not formerly possess any wisdom, shall be in no danger of going astray. Yet the Prophet does not mean that believers, after the Lord has taken them by the hand, will be ignorant; but he shews what they are before the Lord becomes their leader.

9. *There shall not be there a lion.* He adds another favour

of God, that the people, though they travel through a wilderness, will be protected against every hostile attack. Formerly he mentioned it (Isaiah xxxiv. 14) as one of the curses of God, that wild beasts would meet the Jews wherever they went; but now he declares that, when they have been received into favour, no lions and no beasts of prey shall attack them; because the Lord will ward them off, so as to open up a way for his people free from all danger and from all fear. For although they had received liberty to return, yet they might have met with many obstacles; and therefore he says that the Lord will remove every annoyance and obstruction.

We may draw from this a profitable doctrine, namely, that God not only begins, but conducts to the end, the work of our salvation, that his grace in us may not be useless and unprofitable. As he opens up the way, so he paves it, and removes obstacles of every description, and is himself the leader during the whole journey. In short, he continues his grace towards us in such a manner that he at length brings it to perfection. And this ought to be applied to the whole course of our life. Here we walk as on a road, moving forward to that blessed inheritance. Satan presents numerous obstructions, and dangers surround us on every side; but the Lord, who goes before and leads us by the hand, will not leave us in the midst of the journey, but at length will perfectly finish what he has begun in us by his Spirit. (Philip. i. 6.) Yet it ought to be observed that the very beasts, through God's kindness, shall be tamed, so as not to direct their rage and cruelty against us, as it is said, "I will make a covenant for you with the fowls of heaven, and with the beasts of prey." (Hosea ii. 18.)

10. *Therefore the redeemed of Jehovah shall return.* The Prophet confirms the former doctrine, that God hath determined to redeem his people, and therefore that nothing can resist his decree. He calls them "the redeemed of God," that they may consider his power, and may not estimate by human means the promise which he has made about their return. He says also, that *they will come to Zion*, because God does not in vain wish to bring them out of Babylon,

and to leave them when they have commenced their journey. At the same time, it ought to be observed, that we have no means of entering the Church but by the redemption of God; for under the example of the ancient people, a general representation is placed before our eyes, that we may know that no man is rescued from the tyranny of the devil, to which we are all subject, till the grace of God go before; for no man will redeem himself. Now, since this redemption is a gift peculiar to the kingdom of Christ, it follows that he is our only deliverer, as is also attested by the declaration, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John viii. 36.)

Yet it is not enough that we have once been redeemed; for the design is, that we should dwell in the Church of God, and make progress from day to day. Since therefore we have been delivered by Christ, we ought to labour with all our might, and continually to strive to gain that end. If it be said that we do not need to perform a long journey, in order to be admitted into the Church of God, (for we are received into it by baptism,) I reply, that here the Prophet discourses metaphorically about the whole course of life; because the time when "the redeemed of God" shall actually "come to Zion," is when the course of life is closed, and they pass into a blessed life. And it ought also to be observed, that the greater the progress which we make in the grace of God, and the more close our alliance to the Church, the nearer do we approach to Zion.

And they shall obtain joy and gladness. By the words "joy and gladness," he means that there will be so great happiness under the reign of Christ, that we shall have abundant reason to rejoice. And indeed the true and only ground of rejoicing is, to know that we are reconciled to God, whose favour is sufficient for our perfect happiness, "so that we may glory even in tribulation," (Rom. v. 3;) and, on the other hand, when Christ does not enlighten us, we must be darkened by sorrow. Besides, it is certain that the godly do not rejoice in a proper manner without also expressing gratitude to God; and therefore this spiritual joy must be distinguished from that ordinary joy in which irreligious men

indulge; for the reprobate also rejoice, but their end at length shews how pernicious is the wantonness of the flesh, which leads them to take delight in despising God. This kind of "joy" Paul justly (Rom. xiv. 17; Gal. v. 22) calls spiritual; for it does not depend on fading things, such as honour, property, riches, and other things of that nature which quickly perish; but this joy is secret and has its seat in the hearts, from which it cannot be shaken or torn away in any manner, though Satan endeavours by every method to disturb and afflict us; and therefore the Prophet justly adds—

Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. The joy is everlasting, and all "sadness flees away;" for although many bitter griefs are daily endured by the children of God, yet so great is the power and strength of their consolation, that it swallows up all sorrow. "We glory," says Paul, "in our tribulations," (Rom. v. 3;) and this glorying cannot be without joy. The Apostles "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy of suffering dishonour for the name of Jesus." (Acts v. 41.) Yet the godly often suffer heavy distresses, and are not exempt from grief. This is undoubtedly true, but they are not overwhelmed; for they look straight towards God, by whose power they become victorious, just as if a person, elevated on a lofty mountain, looking at the sun, and enjoying his brightness, beheld others in a low valley, surrounded by clouds and darkness, whom that brightness could not reach.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

1. Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, *that* Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them.

2. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem, unto king Hezekiah, with a great army: and he stood by the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field.

3. Then came forth unto him

1. Accidit anno decimo quarto regis Ezechiæ, ut ascenderet Sennacherib rex Assur contra omnes urbes Iuda munitas, et caperet eas.

2. Tum misit rex Assur Rapsacen e Lachis Ierosolymam ad regem Ezechiam cum manu valida, qui stetit in aquæ ductu piscinæ superioris, in via agri fullonis.

3. Et egressus est ad eum Eliacim

Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, which *was* over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder.

4. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence *is* this wherein thou trustest?

5. I say, *sayest thou*, (but *they are but* vain words,) *I have* counsel and strength for war: now, on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

6. Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so *is* Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

7. But if thou say to me, We trust in the Lord our God: *is it* not he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?

8. Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

9. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

10. And am I now come up without the Lord against this land to destroy it? The Lord said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it

11. Then said Eliakim, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand *it:* and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that *are* on the wall.

12. But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? *hath he* not *sent me* to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?

filius Helchiæ præfectus domus, et Sobna cancellarius, et Ioach filius Asaph secretarius.

4. Et dixit illis Rapsaces: Dicite agèdum Ezechiæ, Sic dicit rex magnus, rex Assur, Quæ fiducia hæc qua confisus es?

5. Dixi: (tantum verbum labiorum:) Consilium et fortitudo ad bellum. Nunc super quo confisus es, quod rebellasti adversum me?

6. Ecce confisus es super baculo isto arundineo confracto, super Ægypto; cui si quis innititur, penetrabit in manum ejus, et perforabit eam. Talis est Pharao rex Ægypti erga omnes qui fiduciam habent in eo.

7. Quod si dixeris mihi, In Iehova Deo nostro confidimus; annon hic est cujus abstulit Ezechias excelsa et altaria, dixitque ad Iuda et Ierusalem, coram altari hoc adorabitis?

8. Nunc age, da obsidem domino meo regi Assur. Dabo tibi duo millia equorum; an tibi erunt equites quos illis imponas?

9. Et quomodo aspernaris faciem ducis unius e servis domini mei minoribus, et fiduciam tibi statuis in Ægypto ob currus et equites?

10. Et nunc an absque Iehova ascendi ad terram hanc, ut perdam eam? Iehova mihi dixit: ascende in terram hanc, ut perdas eam.

11. Et dixit Eliacim, et Sobna, et Ioach, ad Rapsacem: loquere quæso ad servos tuos Syriace, quoniam nos intelligimus, et non loquaris nobiscum Iudaice, audiente populo qui est super murum.

12. Et dixit Rapsace: Nunquid ad dominum tuum et ad te misit me dominus meus, ut loquar verba ista? Annon ad viros sedentes super murum, ut comedant stercora sua et bibunt lotium suum vobiscum?

13. Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

14. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you.

15. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

16. Hearken not to Hezekiah; for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make *an agreement* with me *by* a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;

17. Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

18. *Beware* lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

19. Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?

20. Who *are they* among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

21. But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

22. Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

13. Stetit ergo Rapsace, et clamavit voce magna Iudaice, ac dixit: Audite verba regis magni, regis Assur.

14. Sic dicit rex: Ne vobis imponat Ezechias, quia non poterit vos liberare.

15. Neque vos confidere faciat Iehovæ Ezechias, dicens, Liberando liberabit nos Iehova; non tradetur hæc urbs in manum regis Assur.

16. Ne audieritis Ezechiam; quoniam sic dicit rex Assur: Facite mecum benedictionem, et egredimini; et comedant singuli e ficu sua, et bibant singuli aquas putei sui.

17. Donec veniam et assumam vos in terram similem terræ vestræ, terram frumenti et vini, terram panis et vinearum.

18. Ne forte decipiat vos Ezechias, dicens, Iehova eripiet nos. An eripuerunt dii Gentium quisque terram suam e manu regis Assur?

19. Ubi est Deus Amath et Arpad? ubi Deus Sepharvaiim? An liberaverunt Samariam e manu mea?

20. Quis est in omnibus diis istarum terrarum qui liberaverit terram suam e manu mea; ut eruat Iehova Ierusalem e manu mea?

21. Tacuerunt, nec responderunt ei verbum; quoniam præceptum hoc regis erat, qui dixerat: Ne respondeatis illi.

22. Venit autem Eliacim præfectus palatii, et Sobna cancellarius, et Ioach, filius Asaph, secretarius, ad Ezechiam scissis vestibus, et nuntiaverunt illi verba Rapsace.

1. *It happened in the fourteenth year.* In this and the following chapter the Prophet relates a remarkable history,

which may be regarded as the seal of his doctrine, in which he predicted the calamities that would befall his nation, and at the same time promised that God would be merciful to them, and would drive back the Assyrians and defend Jerusalem and the Holy Land. What had already been accomplished made it evident that he had not spoken in vain ; but God intended that it should also be testified to posterity. Yet to the men of that age it was not less advantageous that such a record should be preserved. He had often threatened that the vengeance of God was near at hand, and that the Assyrians were ready at his bidding to be employed by him as scourges ; and at the same time he promised that he would assist Jerusalem even when matters were come to the worst. Both were accomplished, and the greater part of the nation passed by, as with closed eyes, those evident judgments of God, and not less basely despised the assistance which was offered to them. So much the more inexcusable was their gross stupidity.

But to the small number of believers it was advantageous to perceive such illustrious proofs of the hand of God, that greater credit might afterwards be given to Isaiah. The Prophet also might pursue his course more ardently and with unshaken firmness, since God had given so splendid an attestation of his doctrine from heaven. And because the truth of God scarcely obtains from us the honour due to it, unless it be supported by strong proofs, God has provided not less largely for our weakness, that we may perceive as in a mirror that the power of God accompanied the words of Isaiah, and that what he taught on earth was confirmed from heaven. More especially his calling was manifestly sealed, when God delivered Jerusalem from the grievous siege of Sennacherib, and when no hope of safety remained ; so that believers saw that they had been rescued from the jaws of death by the hand of God alone. For this reason I have said that it was a seal to authenticate the prophecies which might otherwise have been called in question.

In the fourteenth year. Not without reason does he specify the time when these things happened ; for at that time Hezekiah had restored the worship of God throughout the

whole of his dominions, (2 Kings xviii. 4;) and, not satisfied with this, sent messengers in various directions to invite the Israelites to come with speed from every place to Jerusalem, to offer sacrifices, and, after long disunion, again to unite in holy harmony of faith, and to worship God according to the injunctions of the Law. While such was the condition of the kingdom that superstitions were removed and the Temple cleansed, and thus the true worship of God was restored, Judea is invaded by the king of Assyria, fields are pillaged, cities are taken, and the whole country is subject to his authority. Jerusalem alone, with a few inhabitants, is left; and in that city Hezekiah was shut up as in a prison.

We must now consider what thoughts might occur to the pious king and to other persons; for if we judge of this calamity according to the perception of the flesh, we shall think that God was unjust in permitting his servant to be reduced to such extremities, whose piety seemed to deserve that the Lord would preserve him in safety and free from all molestation, since his whole desire was to maintain the true worship of God. This was no small trial of the faith of Hezekiah, and ought to be continually placed before our eyes, when we are subjected to the same temptations. The Lord did not punish Hezekiah for carelessness, pleasures, or luxury, and much less for superstitions, or unholy contempt of the Law; for as soon as he began to reign, he laboured with the utmost zeal and carefulness and industry to restore the purity of religion. God therefore intended to try his faith and patience.

2. *Then the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh.* The order of the narrative may here have been altered; for he had formerly said that Sennacherib had taken all the cities of Judea, and now he says that he sent Rabshakeh[1] from Lachish, implying

[1] "The Hebrew doctors will have it that this Rabshakeh was an apostate Jew, and Procopius is of the same opinion, which is not altogether improbable, both because he could speak readily in the Hebrew tongue, and when he blasphemed the Divine Majesty, the king and nobles rent their clothes, which was not usual unless he that uttered such blasphemous words was an Israelite. Some think his name imports that he was the principal cup-bearer to the king of Assyria, who assumed to himself the title of the Great King, because of his great conquests and large dominions."—*White.*

that he was besieging it, and consequently he had not yet stormed them all. But it ought to be observed that historical connection is frequently disturbed, and that what was first in the order of time, comes last in the narrative. Besides, the Scriptures frequently make use of a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, and by which it might be said that all the cities were taken, because those which had been left were few, and Hezekiah had no means of intercourse with them. It appeared, therefore, that the king of Assyria had brought the whole of Judea under his dominion, because nearly all that remained was Jerusalem alone, in which Hezekiah was shut up.

This history is more fully related in the Books of Kings, where it is shewn how eager for peace Hezekiah was; for he laboured to obtain it on any terms. He had delivered up "three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold," which that tyrant had demanded; and he found it necessary to seize the vessels of the Temple, and the golden plates which had been attached to its doors, to make up that sum, because his treasury was exhausted. (2 Kings xviii. 14.) But as such gulfs are insatiable, when he had received that money, he next demanded more, and sought to enforce harder conditions. This was done partly, in order to provoke and torment Hezekiah, (for, having once abused the ready compliance of the pious king, he thought that he would obtain anything,) and partly because he sought an occasion of renewing the war. Yet it ought to be observed that the people were justly punished for their iniquities, as had been foretold; for although true religion flourished as to external worship, yet their life was not changed for the better, and their wickedness was not removed, nor was the inward pollution cleansed from their hearts. Accordingly, because the people did not repent, it was necessary that their obstinate depravity should be severely chastised. But because the measure of their iniquities was not yet full, God abated the fierceness of his anger, and suddenly, when matters were desperate, brought such assistance as could not have been believed.

3 *And Eliakim went to him.* *Eliakim* was formerly

mentioned. It was he to whom the Lord promised that he would give him the chief power in the kingdom after the banishment of Shebna. (Isaiah xxii. 20.) It now appears as if that promise had failed, when he is sent to an enemy as a suppliant, and as one who is about to surrender himself and his companions, and to undergo cruel tyranny. This might also fill the hearts of believers with anxiety, and lead them to doubt the promises of God. Besides, the godly king had such a scarcity of good men, that, along with Eliakim, he was compelled to send Shebna, whom he knew well to be deceitful and treacherous.

סֹפֵר (*sōphēr*) means *scribe;* and accordingly it often denotes learned men or doctors, and sometimes those who took charge of writings and those who had the custody of the royal records. I have translated it *chancellor*, for unquestionably it does not relate to legal skill; and we may infer that this Shebna held a high rank, though he had been deprived of his office as governor. מַזְכִּיר (*măzkīr*) denotes a secretary or recorder.

4. *Say now to Hezekiah.* He relates that the three ambassadors, though they were attended by all the magnificence that yet remained in the kingdom, were not only repulsed, but disdainfully treated by the tyrant's delegate, and loaded with disgraceful reproaches; for, as if Hezekiah had been convicted of wicked revolt, Rabshakeh asks how he had dared to rebel. The particle נָא (*na*) is supposed by some to denote entreaty, and is rendered by them *I pray;* but it would be unsuitable to a proud and insolent man to entreat in this manner. He speaks in the ordinary language of those who lay conditions on the vanquished, or on those who are overwhelmed with fear, whom they wish to compel to make an unconditional surrender, or, as we commonly say, (*sommer*) *to summon.*

Thus saith the great king. In order to give greater validity to the summons, that general speaks in the name of his king, whose greatness he extols to the skies, in order to terrify Hezekiah, when he learns that he has to do with a king of such vast resources. He does not only mean that the first monarch in the world was far superior to Hezekiah,

who in comparison of him was but a petty prince; but he calls the king of Assyria *great*, because by his power he eclipsed all others, so that he stood alone in his lofty rank. By these thunderbolts of words Hezekiah might have been overthrown and subdued, especially since he was so far from being able to resist the power of that tyrant that he was shut up in the city and unable to move out of it.

5. *I have said* (*only a word of the lips.*) In the sacred history (2 Kings xviii. 20) the word employed is, *Thou hast said.* This may be explained as a declaration what kind of courage Rabshakeh thinks that Hezekiah possesses; as if he had said, "Such are thy deliberations." In this passage the use of the first person, "I have said," does not alter the sense; because Rabshakeh, as if he had examined the counsels of Hezekiah and fully understood them all, ironically reproaches him; "I see what thou art thinking, but they are *words of the lips.*" This passage is explained in various ways. Some interpret it, "Thou sayest that thou hast not merely words of the lips," that is, "Thou boastest that thou excellest not only in the use of words, but likewise in courage and wisdom." Others interpret it, "Thou hast words indeed, but wisdom and courage are necessary in war."

Some think that by "words" are meant "prayers." I do not approve of that exposition; for it is excessively farfetched and unnatural, and therefore I view it thus: "Hezekiah has words of lips, that is, he employs a beautiful and elegant style, to keep the people in the discharge of their duty, or, as we commonly say, *He has fine speeches*;[1] but it is not by these that war can be begun or carried on." He therefore means, that he perfectly understands what Hezekiah is doing, and what it is on which he places his chief reliance, namely, on words and eloquence;[2] but these are of no use for war, in which wisdom and courage are needed. It might also be appropriately viewed as relating to the Egyptians, as if he had said that Hezekiah acts foolishly in allowing himself to be cheated by empty promises; and

[1] Il a de belles paroles.

[2] "Assavoir, sur belles paroles." "Namely, on fine speeches."

undoubtedly the Egyptians were liberal in promising mountains of gold, though they gave nothing in reality. But as we shall find that he speaks of the Egyptians, soon afterwards, in a particular manner, I have no doubt that here he ridicules Hezekiah, as if he fed the expectation of the people by empty boasting, while he was not provided with military preparations.

6. *Behold, thou hast trusted in that broken staff of reed.* This is probably separate from the former verse; for, having formerly said that the eloquence by which he flatters the people is all that Hezekiah possesses, and having inferred from this that his confidence is exceedingly foolish, he now comes to other particulars. He employs every method for shaking the hearts of the people, that all, being stunned, may absolutely surrender. Accordingly, after having represented Hezekiah to be contemptible as to his internal resources, he next adds, that the external resources are idle and useless, and says that they are greatly mistaken in expecting any assistance whatever from the Egyptians.

And, first, he compares the Egyptians to "a staff of reed" on account of their weakness; secondly, for the sake of amplification he calls them "a broken staff;" thirdly, he says that it is so far from supporting that it *pierces the hands that lean upon it.* The meaning may be thus summed up, "the hope which the Jews entertain of receiving aid from the Egyptians is not only false and unfounded, but pernicious." And indeed with truth might Rabshakeh have said this, if it had been true that Hezekiah relied on the Egyptians; but he slanderously and falsely accuses the pious king of this vain confidence. Yet God justly rewarded a rebellious and disobedient people by allowing this filthy dog to reproach them with their wicked revolt. Isaiah had formerly (Isaiah xxx. 1, and xxxi. 1, 6) condemned this crime in severe terms, but their deaf ears refused to admit the reproof; and therefore the Jews, who had wickedly despised a Prophet that spoke to them in the name of God, deserved to have Rabshakeh for their instructor.

We are therefore warned by this example, that there is no reason to wonder if unbelievers, who do not obey the counsel

of God for their salvation, and reject all prophecies, are subjected to the jeers of their enemies, as Rabshakeh, the captain of the Assyrian king, now haughtily taunts the rebellious Jews. Yet it is of importance to consider how great a difference there is between the warnings of God and the mockeries of Satan. When God wishes to dissuade us from sinful confidence in the flesh, he declares in general terms, "Cursed be he that trusteth in man," (Jer. xvii. 5,) that the whole world may be reduced to nothing, and that thus we may be satisfied with himself alone; and therefore, when he has brought us low, he instantly imparts courage to us by holding out a remedy. But when Satan deceitfully blames any vain hope, he drives us to despair, and urges us to many other hopes equally bad or still worse, and tempts us to adopt unlawful methods; as Rabshakeh does not smite the hope which the Jews entertained from the Egyptians, in order that they may rely on God alone, but substitutes the king of Assyria, as if safety ought not to be expected from any other quarter. He names *Pharaoh*, but likewise includes the whole nation.

7. *And if thou shalt say to me.* Rabshakeh employs an argument which consists of three parts. Either Hezekiah thinks that he has sufficient strength to resist, or he expects assistance from Egypt, or he trusts in God. If he trusts in himself, he is mistaken; for what is he when compared to my king? As to Egypt, it will render him no assistance, but on the contrary will inflict serious damage. It remains therefore that he expects some assistance from God. But he has thrown down his altars and curtailed his worship; will he not rather be punished on that account? In short, this Rabshakeh takes away from the pious king all assistance, both divine and human.

By this slander Satan attempted not only to wound the heart of the king, that it might sink under the weight of affliction, but to make an impression on the light and fickle multitude; because hitherto in the hearts of many there remained an attachment to superstition, and there was a strong tendency to fall back into this imposture, because the religion which was ancient, and to which they were long accustomed,

had been changed, and, in their opinion,[1] Hezekiah was about to be chastised for his own rashness. In like manner, the Papists in the present day, whenever any adverse event befalls us, maintain that we are punished by God, because we have ventured to set aside ancient ceremonies.[2]

8. *Now come, give a hostage.*[3] He concludes that there will be nothing better for Hezekiah than to lay aside the intention of carrying on war, to surrender himself, and to promise constant obedience to the king of Assyria. To persuade him the more, Rabshakeh again reproaches him with his poverty. "If I shall give thee two thousand horses, thou wilt not find among all thy people men to ride on them. What then is thy strength; or with what confidence dost thou dare to oppose my king?" He does not offer him horses for the sake of respect or of kindness, but in order to terrify and shake still more the heart of Hezekiah. The future tense ought therefore to be explained by the subjunctive mood, "*Although I give* thee two thousand horses, yet thou wilt not find an equal number of riders." I am aware of what is alleged by other commentators; but whoever examines the matter fully will quickly perceive that this is ironical language.[4]

9. *And how dost thou despise?*[5] He confirms the preceding statement, and shews that Hezekiah is so far from being able to endure the presence of his king, that he ought not

[1] "A leur advis."

[2] "Pource que nous avons osé abolir les traditions et ceremonies qui estoyent en usage de long temps." "Because we ventured to abolish the traditions and ceremonies which had been long used."

[3] "Now therefore give pledges *or hostages.*"—Eng. Ver.

[4] "He seems to challenge him to come out and fight with his master, and if he would give security to make that use of them, he would furnish him with two thousand horses, provided he was able to find so many men to set upon them, which are words of the highest contempt and undervaluing of his power; or the meaning may be, he would lay a wager with him he could not find men to sit on so many horses, for few were good horsemen in Judea, where horses were scarce."—*White.* "He taunts Hezekiah on account of the want of cavalry. These words do not refer to the small number of men, but to the very small number of Jews who were skilled in horsemanship; for after Jotham the kings of Judea did not maintain any cavalry, and hence we have already seen (Isaiah xxx. and xxxi.) that a part of the Jews sought cavalry from the Egyptians."—*Rosenmüller.*

[5] "How then wilt thou turn away?"—Eng. Ver.

to be compared to the very smallest of his captains. In this insolent manner does he taunt him, that the Jews may not derive courage from the absence of Sennacherib, who was still detained by the siege of Lachish. Although, therefore, Sennacherib does not yet appear before them with his whole army, Rabshakeh boasts that his lieutenants are sufficiently powerful, so that Hezekiah ought not to hesitate to make submission.

10. *And now have I come up without Jehovah?* He now attacks Hezekiah in another manner, by telling him that it will serve no purpose to assemble his forces and to make other warlike preparations. For he alleges that Hezekiah has not to do or to contend with a mortal man, but with God himself, at whose suggestion, and not at his own, he came hither to destroy the country; and therefore that they who oppose him will fight against God, and consequently all their efforts will be fruitless.

Hence we ought to learn that however earnestly we may be devoted to godliness, and however faithfully we may labour to advance the kingdom of Christ, still we must not expect to be free from every annoyance, but ought rather to be prepared for enduring very heavy afflictions. The Lord does not always recompense our piety by earthly rewards; and indeed it would be an exceedingly unsuitable recompense that we should possess abundant wealth and enjoy outward peace, and that everything should proceed to our wish; for the world reckons even wicked men to be happy on this ground, that they do not endure bad health or adversity, and are free from the pressure of poverty, and have nothing to disturb them. In this respect our condition would not differ at all from that of the reprobate.

This example of Hezekiah, who laboured with all his might to restore religion and the true worship of God, and yet endured calamities so heavy and violent that he was not far from despair, ought to be constantly placed before our eyes, in order that, when we shall think that we have discharged our duty, we may nevertheless be prepared to endure conflicts and troubles of every kind, and may not be disturbed if enemies gain an advantage at the first onset, as if all at once

they would swallow us up. Those proud and haughty minds will quickly fall, when the first ardour has boiled over and spent its foam, and their eagerness and pride will speedily disappear. Rabshakeh boasted of the greatness and power of his king, in order to terrify Hezekiah. Such is the manner in which wicked men act towards us. By threatening words they attack us, and by various terrors they try our patience, or rather through their agency Satan labours, whom we plainly see speaking by the mouth of Rabshakeh. Nay, Satan assumes the character of God himself, and "is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Cor. xi. 14.) Thus also the Spirit of God himself declares, that the strength of man is frail and fading, and that every one who leans on it seeks his own destruction. (Jer. xvii. 5.) Rabshakeh says the same thing, and discourses as if he were discharging the prophetical office by the command of God.

We ought therefore to distinguish wisely when God speaks, and when, on the other hand, his name is falsely assumed by men; for Satan resorts to various artifices to make himself appear to be like God. All these reproaches were unjustly, as we have said, brought by Rabshakeh against Hezekiah, who did not place his hope in his own strength, and did not vaunt himself through reliance on the Egyptians; but godly men, even when they do well, must be exposed to evil reports. By these stratagems Satan attacks our faith, and unjustly slanders us among men. This temptation is highly dangerous, for we are desirous that our integrity should be well known; and when we are well disposed, we take it ill if other men put a different interpretation on our conduct. Thus Satan endeavours by slander to overturn all that has been done out of a good conscience, or accuses us of something with which we are not at all chargeable, or loads us with unfounded slanders, or contrives what never came into our mind; but an upright conscience ought to be like a brazen wall to us, that, imitating the example of Hezekiah, we may stand unshaken against such accusations and slanders.

So far as relates to the last clause, in which Rabshakeh reproaches him with having overturned the worship of

God,[1] every person must plainly see how slanderous is that charge; for Hezekiah had taken away false gods and superstitious[2] worship, which God abhors. (2 Kings xviii. 4.) But we need not wonder that wicked men cannot distinguish between the true God and the false, between superstition and religion. And the same thing is practised amongst us every day; for the Papists, who are delighted with nothing but their own superstitions, accuse us of having taken away innumerable inventions of men, and complain that we have impaired and almost abolished the worship of God. They taunt us also in the same manner as that Rabshakeh, "Would God assist those who have taken away his worship, profaned the holy temples, and everything that was established in that beautiful order?" The reason is, that in Popery everything had a dazzling appearance, and drew the admiration of men; while we retain no ceremonies but those which are plain and simple, and free from all pageantry, and therefore they think that we have taken away the worship of God, which they estimate by outward appearances. If any adverse event befalls us, they exclaim that it is richly deserved, that all the blame attaches to us, that the whole world is punished for our ungodliness, and if we ourselves suffer any calamity they taunt us still more.

Yet with resolute faith we must stand out against such ungodly speeches, by shewing that what they call the worship of God is not his worship, but that we have taken away, and have justly taken away, mere trifles, and that all the contrivances of men do not belong to the worship of God, but are delusions of Satan, and that nothing is more destructive. We must therefore stand out with unshaken faith against reproaches of every kind, by which Satan endeavours to throw a shade over the practice of godliness. At first sight it appears to be shameful that he overthrew many altars and left but one, that he profaned many temples that one might remain. (2 Kings xviii. 4.) But Hezekiah was fully acquitted by this single defence, that he undertook

[1] Our author refers to the charges contained in the 7th verse of this chapter.—*Ed.*

[2] "Les idols et l'idolatrie." "Idols and idolatry."

nothing but by the word of God; and therefore that he was satisfied with a single altar, because God had forbidden him to erect more, and that he had thrown down all images, because they had been unlawfully set up in opposition to the instructions of the Law. (Exod. xx. 4.) We have the same dispute with the Papists in the present day, because they blame us on no other ground than that we have set aside a huge mass of ceremonies, and retain only what God has enjoined. In such cases, however, we must not argue about what pleases men, but what is approved by God.

11. *Then said Eliakim.* This circumstance again shews how deeply Hezekiah was depressed, when by his ambassador he entreats so humbly the servant of his enemy. It shews also with what pride Rabshakeh was puffed up, when he rejected so insolently all entreaties; and the refusal was the more shameful, because what was requested was not of great value. From these matters we learn that it was not owing to Hezekiah that he did not pacify the rage of the enemy; for forgetful almost of his royal rank, Hezekiah endeavours with all possible modesty to soothe him. If at any time we happen to be oppressed by unjust violence, let us not be ashamed to yield up our rights and to supplicate with humility. Now, when Hezekiah was so submissive, because he saw that he was unable to resist the king of Assyria, this tends powerfully to magnify the glory of God in preserving a nation which was nearly ruined. For that deliverance would have been less remarkable, if they had been rescued only from an ordinary danger; but when they were not far from destruction, so much the more manifest is the hand of God, who by an extraordinary miracle subdued and ruined an enemy that had already set his feet on their neck. (2 Kings xix. 31.)

Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language.[1]

[1] "*In Aramean.* This request implies an apprehension of the bad effect of his address upon the multitude. *Aramean* corresponds very nearly to *Syrian* in latitude of meaning; but the language meant is not what we call *Syriac*, but an older form, which was probably current, as the French is now, at the courts and among the educated classes of an extensive region. *Jewish* is *Hebrew*, so called by the Jews, as the language of the whole British empire is called *English*, or as German is sometimes called *Saxon*."—*Alexander*.

They request that he will not speak in this manner in the presence of the people; because it is difficult to restrain a people naturally giddy and fickle, for they are easily moved, and tremble at the smallest alarm.[1] They would have wished that Rabshakeh should not speak to them in the Jewish language, because they were desirous to enter into any moderate terms of peace. For that good king tried every method of allaying the rage of that tyrant, but without any success.[2] These ambassadors therefore gain nothing from Rabshakeh; when he is entreated, he grows worse, and (as is usually the case with haughty men) becomes more insolent.

12. *And Rabshakeh said.* Hence we see the fierceness and insolence of the enemy, and hence also it is evident that Hezekiah's kingdom was on the brink of ruin; for here Rabshakeh speaks like a conqueror, and does not address Hezekiah as a king, but as if he had been his slave. When therefore we see Rabshakeh swelled with so much pride, we ought at the same time to recollect that Hezekiah was entirely overwhelmed and destitute of all confidence, so that he was looked upon as ruined. Hence we also infer that Rabshakeh was not sent for the purpose of offering any conditions of peace, but rather to obtain an unconditional surrender, and to strike the people with alarm; for Sennacherib had sent him for this purpose with a powerful army. Hence also he boasts that he has nothing to do with the king, that he addresses the people for their advantage, and, in order to terrify them still more, mentions the distress and calamities into which they will throw themselves if they choose to obey Hezekiah; that they will perish through hunger, and will be compelled to eat and drink what is revolting; and therefore, that their wisest course will be to surrender in good time, and to provide for their safety.

13. *Therefore Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice*

[1] "I suppose Eliakim perceived the people to be frightened with big words, and therefore entreated him in the name of the other commissioners sent to treat with him, to speak no longer in the *Jews'* language, but in his own; for he was not sent to treat with the people, but with them who understood the *Syrian* tongue very well."—*White.*

[2] "Mais c'estoit temps perdu." "But it was time thrown away."

in the Jewish language. The Prophet shews by what expedients Rabshakeh endeavoured to shake the heart of the people, and first relates that he spoke in the Jewish language, though the ambassadors entreated him not to do so. It was, indeed, exceedingly shocking that the holy language, which had been consecrated to the mysteries of heavenly wisdom, was profaned and prostituted to wicked blasphemies; and this must undoubtedly have been a sore temptation to weak minds. But this should lead us to remark, that no enemies are more destructive than those who speak the same language as ourselves. At the present day we find this to be true in many who learn our language, that is, our way of speaking, that they may be able to insinuate themselves into the ears of weak and ignorant persons, so as to draw them aside from the true faith. Thirty years ago, the Papists had a language which was barbarous and totally at variance with the style of the Holy Spirit; scarcely were they heard to utter a word which breathed of Christian piety; but now they have succeeded in acquiring such skill as to know how to cloak their impieties under the ordinary language of Scripture, as if they were speaking in a Christian manner. Thus we see that it was Satan who framed that style; for he is their teacher and instructor as truly as he formerly was the teacher and instructor of Rabshakeh.

When the Prophet says that he *stood*, he expresses the fierceness and insolence of the wicked man; for the very attitude shews how haughtily he conducted himself. Formerly he *stood*, but now he placed himself in such an attitude as to be better seen, and strike greater terror into the Jews.

Hear the words of the great king. Having already spoken of the greatness of his king, he repeats his commands. It is customary with Satan to exaggerate in words the power of the enemies, and to represent the dangers as greater than they really are, in order to compel us to lose courage; for when our eyes are dazzled by the vain splendour of earthly objects, we faint. We ought therefore to contrast the power of God with all dangers; and if we have that power constantly placed before our eyes, there is nothing that can do

us injury. With high disdain and great insolence the enemies will boast of their greatness and strength, and, on the other hand, will mock at our feebleness and our small numbers; but if the Lord is with us, we have nothing to fear.

14. *Thus saith the king.* While he claims for his master the name of *king*, he speaks of Hezekiah as a private individual, without adding any title.

Let not Hezekiah impose upon you. He goes on to utter impudent calumnies against him, and at the same time vomits out his venom against God himself; for he calls it "imposture" and "deception" for Hezekiah to rely on his favour, and to exhort his subjects to cherish the same confidence. But with similar calumnies are we now assailed by the Papists, who say that we bewitch the minds of men and lead them to destruction, and who have no pretext for saying so, except that we teach them that they ought to hope in the true God. But we have no reason to wonder that the same things which were spoken against the good king are likewise brought forward against us, since they proceed from the same inventor and teacher of slander, Satan.

For he will not be able to deliver you. Rabshakeh's assertion, that they cannot be delivered by the hand of Hezekiah, is indeed true, unless God assist; and Hezekiah did not lay claim to this or rob God of the honour due to him, but, on the contrary, testified that his own safety and that of the people were in the hand of God. But the enemy found it necessary to employ some pretext, as wicked men commonly do at the present day, when they slander our doctrine; for they employ pretexts which give high plausibility to what they say, and which actually deceive men, when they are not closely examined.

15. *And let not Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah.* He quotes the exhortation by which Hezekiah encouraged the people, and speaks lightly of it as an idle and unfounded speech. Hence we see plainly that wicked men, though they assert the power of God, treat it with contempt; for although he does not openly deny that God can assist, if he choose, yet, by sapping the foundations of their faith, he does all that he can to reduce the power of God to nothing.

His intention is, to discourage the hearts of the people in such a manner that they may be constrained, as if in despair, to submit and receive laws from a victorious tyrant.

But in order to destroy their confidence in the assistance of God, he employs also another expedient, by flattering their hearts with the allurements of a more comfortable life; for there is nothing to which we are more prone than to revolt from God, when we are drawn away by the appearance of advantage. If the world flatter and caress, the hope of eternal salvation quickly passes away; for our senses are always fixed on the present state of things. Fortified by this resource, Rabshakeh advises, "Do not depend on an uncertain hope, but rather receive what is certain." And this discourse is powerfully fitted to persuade; for nothing is more agreeable to men than to have in hand what they consider to be desirable; and they are so impatient of delay that they prefer an immediate advantage to what is very distant. Rabshakeh, therefore, reasons thus: "Hezekiah promises to you the assistance of God, but we do not see it; he holds you in suspense about what is uncertain; but my king promises to you those things which are at hand, and will assuredly bestow them." This might appear to be a strong argument; but we must observe the sophistry; for by the same stratagem does Satan frequently attack us, and lead us aside from confidence in God.

The Lord calls us to the hope of eternal life; that hope is concealed, "for we hope (Rom. viii. 25) for what we do not see;" he promises that he will be our deliverer, and yet allows us to languish and faint; so that it appears that our hope is vain, if we look at the present condition of things. On this ground Satan attacks us. "Why dost thou hope in vain? What is the fruit of thy faith? What dost thou expect beyond the world?" In short, this is our daily lamentation. When Christ calls us to heaven, Satan endeavours to keep us still on the earth; and therefore we must adhere firmly to the promises, that, "hoping against hope," (Rom. iv. 18,) we may trust in God, and not suffer ourselves to be drawn away from him by any allurements.

16. *Do not listen to Hezekiah.* While he labours to turn

away the hearts of the people from Hezekiah, he at the same time invites them to pleasures, that they may forget God and not expect anything from him. It is as if he had said, "Do not believe God, but rather believe my king." Thus Satan deals with us; for, darkening the goodness of God by his clouds, and holding out to us the masks of false hope, he secretly and indirectly creeps into the place of God, or employs creatures to entangle us in his nets. He holds out pleasures, and some kind of more agreeable life, with this boast, "God shews it to you at a distance, I present it to you."

Though Hezekiah is mentioned, yet the comparison is actually made between God and the king of Assyria; for Hezekiah, as he was the servant of God, made no false pretensions, and did not boast of any vain confidence, but, relying on true and most certain promises, faithfully exhorted the people to seek God; but Rabshakeh adorned his king by robbing God, and yet was the servant of Satan, to withdraw the people from confidence in God to all impiety.

Make with me a blessing.[1] "To make a blessing" is to conduct themselves in a friendly manner; as if he had said, "Do not give any hostile indication, or risk a battle. Surrender, make your submission to my king." Sennacherib does not merely demand that he shall be heard, but likewise that the people shall swear allegiance to him; and, in order to allure them to him the more powerfully, he makes use of the word *blessing* as a cloak to that bondage which was in itself hateful. He bids them purchase a quiet life, and other conveniencies which they formerly enjoyed, by that miserable revolt; that is, by forsaking Hezekiah and going out to him; for to revolt from a pious king, whom God had appointed, and who was a type of Christ, was more wretched and miser-

[1] "Make [an agreement] with me [by] a present, or seek my favour by a present.—Heb. Make with me a blessing."—Eng. Ver. *εἰ βούλεσθε εὐλογηθῆναι*, "if you wish to be blessed."—*Sept.* "Come out to me for the sake of peace, and bless me, and bring me a peace-offering."—*Jarchi.* "ברכה, (*bĕrāchāh,*) *blessing* is here figuratively used for *peace;* for since blessings commonly ran in this form, *Peace to thee, to you,* it appears that *peace* was called *blessing.* The Chaldee interpreter has therefore rendered it correctly,—עבדו עמי שלמא, (*gnăbdū gnĭmmī shălmā,*) *make peace with me.*"—*Rosenmüller.*

able than anything else that could befall them, and could not take place without denying God himself, who had set up in Judea that token of heavenly favour.

17. *Till I come and take you away.* He now adds another condition far harder than the former; for he declares that peace cannot be made with Sennacherib in any other way than by the people going into banishment. This was nothing else than to abandon the worship of God and degenerate into superstition, and voluntarily to quit the inheritance which God had given them. But because he addresses a people whose distressed condition and extreme danger had struck them with terror, he insolently commands them to save their lives.

Into a land of corn and wine. Here we see more clearly that Rabshakeh's speech is nothing else than an image of the temptations by which Satan daily attacks our faith; for there is nothing which Satan more constantly attempts[1] than to withdraw us from confidence in God by the allurements and pleasures of this world; that we ought to enjoy peace and quietness, and to purchase them at any price; and that happiness consists in plentiful abundance of good things. But most of all, he makes a wicked use of adversity to press upon us, and more eagerly urge us to shake off the yoke of God. Gently indeed, and by secret and unseen methods, he insinuates himself; but, after having once inveigled and caught us in his net, so as to lead us to value present advantages more highly than those which are future, he adds this condition, that he shall hold us entirely bound and devoted to him; which we certainly cannot avoid, when he holds us entangled by his plausible hopes, and by the relish of present objects.

Into a land like your own land. Because the word banishment was harsh and disagreeable, and it was not easy to part with the delightfulness of their native country, in order to shew that they sustain no loss by leaving it, he says, that the country into which they are about to be conveyed is equally fertile and productive.[2] Thus he draws a veil over their

[1] "Car toute son etude est." "For his whole study is."

[2] "It has been disputed what particular land is here meant, some saying

eyes, that they might not think that they were losing anything. Yet he cunningly passes by what ought above all other things to be valued by them, the worship of God, the temple, the kingdom, the order of holy government, and everything else that belonged to the heavenly inheritance. Without these what happiness can there be? Let every one therefore learn diligently to apply his mind to spiritual blessings; "for to dwell in the house of God," is justly pronounced to be a far more valuable blessing than all the luxuries and prosperity of the world. (Ps. lxxxiv. 4, 10.) Thus shall we guard against being led away by the hope of present objects and deprived of true happiness; for this is a dreadful punishment by which the Lord takes vengeance on the unbelief of men, and which all godly persons ought to dread, that they may not faint or give way under any distresses and calamities.

18. *Lest perhaps Hezekiah deceive you.* This is another argument different from the former, by which he endeavours to withdraw the people from Hezekiah and from confidence in God. Formerly he boasted that he was God's servant, and that God had sent him to destroy Judea, and on that ground he assured himself of certain victory; but now he openly insults God himself. At the first onset wicked men do not usually betray their scorn and impiety, but at length the Lord makes known their dispositions, and constrains them to discover the venom of their own heart. Now therefore the wicked Rabshakeh bursts forth with greater violence, and boasts that he will gain the victory over God himself.

Have any of the gods of the nations rescued their land? He speaks in the person of his master, that he had obtained great victories over many and powerful nations. They had their "gods," by whose protection they thought that they were defended; and therefore Sennacherib thought that he had vanquished the "gods" themselves, because he had vanquished the nations which relied on their aid. The conse-

Mesopotamia, to which others object that it was not a wine-growing country. But, as Knobel observes, there is no need of supposing that the Assyrian's description was exactly true. He may indeed have intended merely to promise them in general a country as abundant as their own."—*Alexander.*

quence is, that he breaks out into such insolence as not to hesitate to compare himself to the living God, and is impelled by such rage that he brings his own strength into conflict with the power of God.

Thus, although at first wicked men conceal their contempt of God, yet they afterwards shew that they claim everything for themselves, and that they are "without God."[1] (Eph. ii. 12.) In words, indeed, they pretend to ascribe victories to their idols; but afterwards, as Habakkuk says, they "sacrifice to their net, and offer incense to their drag." (Hab. i. 16.) We see hypocrites do this also at the present day; for they run to do honour to their idols after having obtained a victory, but immediately afterwards boast of their plans, and wisdom, and courage, and military forces; which plainly shews that they ascribe to themselves and not to their idols all that has happened.

By such insolent boasting, therefore, he shewed that it was a lie, when he said that he acknowledged God to be the author of his victories. Besides, it was impossible that these words should not give dreadful agony to the heart of the good king, when he was informed that the promises of God were condemned as false, when that wicked man openly insulted God and linked their cause with idols. And these things are related, in order that we may behold the patience of the good king, and may resolve to imitate him when anything of the same kind shall take place.

Have they delivered? When he sets himself in opposition to all the gods, and declares that he is more powerful than they are, this is so much at variance with common sense, that it is abhorred even by wicked men themselves; yet if the Lord press hard upon them, if he put them to the torture, he speedily extorts from them such language. When they make a premeditated speech, they pretend that they are worshippers of God, but afterwards God constrains them to bring out and acknowledge what was lurking within. Let us therefore learn, that superstition is always accompanied by pride; so that they who do not know God, do not scruple to rise up against everything that is called God; and

[1] "Et n'ont que faire de luy." "And have nothing to do with him."

let us not be astonished at the rebellion and insolence of wicked men, for nothing but the pure knowledge of God can teach us humility. And yet that wicked man cannot be excused as if he justly reproached idols with their weakness and uselessness; for we ought to observe his sentiments and the purpose of his heart, since he does not ridicule the superstition and vain confidence of the nations, but in the idols themselves he pours contempt on the power of God. In like manner, when Dionysius the tyrant ridiculed his gods, he fought with God and defied him to a contest; for he attacked, in opposition to his conscience, such a deity as his mind could comprehend. The same observation might be made on all other infidels who treated with scorn false religions which they supposed to be from God.

Here we ought also to observe another kind of blasphemy, by which the majesty of God is wickedly dishonoured; which is, that Rabshakeh confounds God with idols, and represents him to be one of the multitude. For what blasphemy is it to confound the immortal God and creator of all things with what is most detestable, to confound truth with falsehood, glory with shame, heaven with earth? "The Lord is great," says David, "and worthy of the highest praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are nothing; but the Lord made the heavens. Majesty and honour are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." (Ps. xcvi. 4-6.)

19. *Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?* It is supposed that *Hamath* was Antioch in Syria, that *Arpad* was that city from which colonies were brought to Damascus, and that *Sepharvaim* was a city situated in the country of Damascus. If this be true, Rabshakeh mentions the ancient names of cities, from which many nations had formerly come, and which afterwards lost not only their celebrity, but likewise their distinctive names, and aims at producing in them greater alarm, by reminding them of so great revolutions. However that may be, he mentions chiefly the neighbouring cities, the destruction of which might affect them more deeply on account of their being better known to the Jews. And I have no doubt that these places belonged to Syria

and Israel; as if he had said, "Look at these two kingdoms subdued, which were presided over by their gods as their guardians. Will your God resist me?"

20. *That Jehovah should rescue Jerusalem out of my hand?*[1] The particle כִּי (*kī*) is taken by commentators in both places interrogatively, "Did the gods of the nations deliver? And will your God deliver?" But in order to make the meaning flow more smoothly, I have preferred to render the second clause, "*that* your God should deliver;" for the repetition of the same word marks a resemblance. Yet the words appear also to contain irony; as if he had said in mockery, "Yes; as the gods of the nations delivered their worshippers, so will your God assist you."

This insolence of ungodly men arises from their not understanding that God punishes the sins of men when they suffer any adversity. And first they go wrong in this respect that they institute a wicked and absurd comparison, "I have conquered that nation, and therefore I am better or stronger." They do not perceive that they were appointed to be the executioners of God's anger for the punishment of iniquities; for, although they say that they have received something from God, they do it hypocritically, and do not consider his will or his justice. They afterwards rise higher, for they venture to make a comparison between them and God himself, "I have conquered those over whom God presided, and therefore I have conquered God himself."

And here we see painted in a lively manner what was formerly expressed,—"Ah! Assyria, the rod of my indignation; but he thought not so." (Isaiah x. 5.) In that passage God forewarned believers, that although Sennacherib, in blind madness, lifted himself up and attempted to overthrow all divine power, still they should continue to believe this doctrine, that he could do nothing more than what he was permitted by heaven to do. It is our duty to acknowledge that God inflicts punishment by the hand of wicked men, who may be

[1] "*And* (when or where was it) *that they delivered Samaria out of my hand?* כִּי (*kī*) is not an interrogative pronoun, (Who have delivered?) nor an interrogative particle, (Have they delivered?) but a connective particle, dependent upon something not expressed."—*Alexander*.

regarded as the instruments of God's anger; and therefore we ought to turn away our eyes from them, that we may look directly at God, by whom we are justly punished. If wicked men are more powerful, let us not think that the arm of God is broken, but let us consider that we do not deserve his assistance; for he arms enemies for our destruction, supplies them with vigour and with armies, drives them backwards and forwards whenever he thinks proper, and gives us up into their hands when we have turned away from him.

Accordingly, when the Turk now rises up haughtily against us, because he has already vanquished so great a multitude of Christians, we need not be alarmed on that account, as if the power of God were diminished, and as if he had not strength to deliver us. But we ought to consider in how many ways the inhabitants of Greece and of Asia provoked his anger, by the prevalence of every kind of base and shocking licentiousness in those countries, and by the dreadful superstitions and wickedness which abounded. On this account very severe chastisement was needed for restraining the crimes of those who made a false profession of the name of God. Hence came the prosperity of the Turk, and hence was it followed by a shockingly ruinous condition throughout the whole of the east. Yet we see him insolently raising his crest, laughing at our religion, and applauding his own in a strange manner; but still more does he applaud himself, and "sacrifice to his net," (Habakkuk i. 16,) as we have already said of other infidels.

We ought, therefore, to direct our minds towards the judgments of God, that we may not think that the Turk acquired such extensive dominion by his own strength. But the Lord allowed him greater freedom, for the purpose of punishing the ungodliness and wickedness of men, and will at length restrain his insolence at the proper time. Now, although prosperity is a token of the blessing of God, yet we must not begin with it if we wish to form right views of God himself, as Mahometans and Papists infer from the victories which they have gained, that God is in some respects subject to their control. But when we have known the true

God, blessings are added in the proper order to testify his grace and power.

Yet we ought always to beware of making the smallest claim for ourselves, for as soon as foolish confidence has gained admission, we shall immediately be seized with such fury as to believe that even God is not equal to us. At first, even wicked men will be shocked at anything so grossly irreligious; but when we are maddened by such diabolical pride as to rob God and adorn ourselves with the spoils, we easily fall into the practice of open insult. Sennacherib still retained some form of piety, for we shall afterwards read (Isaiah xxxvii. 38) that "he was slain in the temple of his god, while he was worshipping there;" and he undoubtedly wished that God would be gracious to him; but, as in this passage he treads under his feet the Creator of heaven and earth along with the gods of the nations, so he would not have hesitated, when an opportunity occurred, to act in the same manner towards his own idol.

21. *And they were silent.* This is added in order that we may more fully understand how deep was the affliction which prevailed throughout the whole of Judea; for the good king, having hardly any strength or means of defence, is therefore struck dumb even when an enemy insults him. Ambassadors were sent to soothe the enemy; when they are unsuccessful they are enjoined to be silent, that they might not provoke that savage beast, which already was too much excited, to cruelty. Yet it is uncertain whether these words relate to the ambassador or to the people, against whom Rabshakeh threw out these reproaches; and indeed it is probable, that it rather refers to those who guarded the walls, who, though they were sharply piqued by the taunts of the enemy, yet were not provoked to quarrels or disturbance, because they obeyed the king's command. Hence, also, we infer that it arose from the peculiar kindness of God, that they were so much disposed to yield obedience when matters were desperate.

It will perhaps be objected that they ought not to have been silent when such blasphemies were uttered against God; for we ought not to conceal our sentiments when wicked

men mock, and jeer, and reproach God, even though our life should be put in danger. We ought, at least, to testify that we cannot patiently endure that his honour and glory should be attacked. But it is not said that they were silent because they expressed their assent, or cared nothing about the reproaches which were cast on God, and which, though not a word was uttered by them, gave deep pain to the ambassadors, and prompted them to the attitudes and tokens of grief; for afterwards, such is the bitterness of their sorrow that they tear their garments, and by this token they shew that they hold such blasphemies in abhorrence and detestation. But as it would have been of no avail for the ambassadors to debate with Rabshakeh, they returned peaceably and without any tumult; and the people, because it was useless to make any disturbance, reckoned it enough to meet the wicked man's impertinence by silent groans. And it is no despicable courage, even when we have it not in our power to utter a syllable, still not to shrink or flinch, but to remain quietly in our place.

Hence we are also reminded that we ought not always to contend with wicked men when they reproach and tear in pieces the name of God; for amidst bitter strife and confused noise the truth will not be heard. And yet we must not on that account give way to cowardice, by thinking that we ought to be excused for being silent, whenever wicked men rise up against God; for our silence will have no excuse if we do not in some way testify that it is highly displeasing to us, and if we do not, as far as lies in our power, declare that nothing is more distressing to us than that the name of God should be dishonoured. We must, therefore, give expression to our zeal, that wicked men may not think that we have no regard for the honour of God, and that we are not moved when they blaspheme it.

22. *Then came Eliakim.* We now see that Eliakim and the other ambassadors were not silent as if they either approved of the impiety of Rabshakeh, or through dread of danger connived at such blasphemies; for they tear their garments, and in that manner give visible display how highly they are offended at those wicked slanders. I except *Shebna*,

who was destitute of piety, and was only driven by shame to assume the dress of mourning along with others as a matter of form. It was customary among the Jews and other eastern nations, when they viewed anything with strong abhorrence, to tear their garments; for those nations, having much greater warmth of temperament than we have who inhabit cold countries, display greater vehemence in gesture, deportment, dress, and other outward signs. Here it ought also to be observed, that they who took no notice of the insults offered to them as private individuals, whenever they hear reproaches uttered against God, "tear their garments;" for they who are ready to take offence at an insult offered to them in their private capacity, where patience was needed, and who are unmoved when they learn that the name of God is dishonoured, give evidence that they have no zeal or piety.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

1. And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard *it*, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.

2. And he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz.

3. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day *is* a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth.

4. It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant *that is* left.

5. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6. And Isaiah said unto them,

1. Factum est autem ut, hoc audito, rex Ezechias scinderet vestimenta sua, et sacco opertus veniret in domum Iehovæ.

2. Simul misit Eliacim praefectum palatii; et Sobnam cancellarium, et seniores sacerdotes, saccis opertos, ad Isaiam filium Amoz, prophetam.

3. Qui dixerunt illi: Sic dicit Ezechias: Dies angustiæ et increpationis et blasphemiæ dies hic, quia filii venerunt ad partum, neque est vis pariendi.

4. Si forte audiet Iehova Deus tuus verba Rapsacæ, quem misit rex Assur dominus ejus, ad maledicendum Deo viventi, et arguendum verbis, quæ audivit Iehova Deus tuus. Tu ergo levabis orationem pro reliquiis quæ adhuc extant.

5. Venerunt servi regis Ezechiæ ad Isaiam.

6. Et dixit illis Isaias: Sic dicetis

Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

8. So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

9. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee: and when he heard *it*, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,

10. Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

11. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly, and shalt thou be delivered?

12. Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, *as* Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which *were* in Telassar?

13. Where *is* the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?

14. And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.

15. And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying,

16. O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou *art* the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

17. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sen-

domino vestro: Sic dicit Iehova, Ne timeas a verbis quæ audiisti quæ mihi exprobrarunt servi regis Assur.

7. Ecce apponam illi ventum; audiet enim rumorem, et revertetur in terram suam; et faciam ut cadat gladio in terra sua.

8. Reversus autem Rapsaces invenit regem Assur oppugnantem Lobnam. Audivit enim profectum a Lachis.

9. Audiens autem a Thirhaka rege Æthiopiæ, egressus est, ut pugnet contra te; ex quo audivit, misit nuntios ad Ezechiam, dicens:

10. Sic dicetis Ezechiae regi Iuda: Non te decipiat Deus tuus, in quo tu confidis, dicens: Non tradetur Ierusalem in manum regis Assur.

11. Ecce tu audiisti quæ fecerunt reges Assur universis terris, quomodo vastaverunt eas; et tu liberaberis?

12. An liberaverunt dii gentium, quos perdiderunt patres mei, Gozam, et Harum, Rezeph, et filios Edom, qui fuerunt in Bithlassar?

13. Ubi rex Amath, rex Arpad, rex civitatis Sepharvaiim, Hena et Iva?

14. Accepit Ezechias literas e manu nuntiorum, et legit eas, et ascendit in domum Iehovæ, et expandit eas coram Iehova.

15. Tum oravit Ezechias ad Deum, dicens:

16. Iehova exercituum, Deus Israel, qui habitas inter cherubin: tu ipse Deus solus super omnia regna terræ; tu fecisti cœlos et terram.

17. Inclina Iehova aurem tuam, et audi; aperi Iehova oculos tuos et vide; et audi cuncta verba Senna-

nacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.

18. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries,

19. And have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them.

20. Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the Lord, *even* thou only.

21. Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria:

22. This *is* the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him, The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, *and* laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

23. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed; and against whom hast thou exalted *thy* voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy One of Israel.

24. By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, *and* the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, *and* the forest of his Carmel.

25. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.

26. Hast thou not heard long ago, *how* I have done it; *and* of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities *into* ruinous heaps.

27. Therefore their inhabitants *were* of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were

cherib, qui misit ad exprobrandum Deo vivo.

18. Sane Iehova, perdiderunt reges Assur cunctas terras, terram, inquam, eorum,

19. Posueruntque deos earum in ignem, quoniam non sunt dii, sed opus manuum hominis, lignum, et lapis; ideo perdiderunt eos.

20. Et nunc Iehova Deus noster, serva nos e manu ejus; ut cognoscant omnia regna terræ quod tu Iehova es solus.

21. Tunc misit Isaias filius Amoz ad Ezechiam, dicens: Sic dicit Iehova Deus Israel; Quoniam me precatus es de Sennacherib rege Assur;

22. Hoc est verbum quod loquutus est Iehova de eo: Sprevit te, subsannavit te, virgo filia Sion; movit post te caput filia Ierusalem.

23. Quem probris affecisti? et quem contumeliose aggressus es? Super quem exaltasti vocem tuam, et in sublime extulisti oculos tuos? nempe, super sanctum Israelis.

24. In manu servorum tuorum exprobrasti Domino ac dixisti: Ego in multitudine curruum meorum ascendam in excelsa montium, ad latera Libani, succidam summa cedrorum ejus, electas ejus abietes; tum veniam ad summum extremitatis, sed sylvam ejus campestrem, (*vel, planitiei ejus.*)

25. Fodiam, et bibam aquas; exsiccabo planta pedum meorum cunctos lacus obsidionis.

26. Annon audiisti quod a longinquo tempore fecerim eam; a diebus antiquis formaverim ipsam? Nunc vero adducerem eam, ut sit in desolationem, in acervos ruinarum, quemadmodum urbes munitas.

27. Nam incolæ earum manu fuerunt mutilati, territi et confusi sunt; facti sunt tanquam gramen agri,

as the grass of the field, and *as* the green herb; *as* the grass on the house-tops, and *as corn* blasted before it be grown up.

28. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

29. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears; therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

30. And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat *this* year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

31. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward:

32. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.

33. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

34. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord.

35. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

36. Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses.

37. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

38. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him

olus viride, herba tectorum, quæ ante maturitatem exarescit.

28. Sessionem tuam, exitum tuum, et introitum tuam novi, et iracundiam tuam contra me.

29. Quoniam iratus es contra me; ideo tumultus tuus ascendit in aures meas. Itaque ponam hamum (*vel*, *circulum*) meum in narem tuam, et frænum meum in labia tua; et reducam te per viam ubi venisti.

30. Hoc autem erit tibi signum: Comedes hoc anno quæ sponte nascuntur, secundo etiam sponte provenientia, in tertio vero anno seminabitis et metetis, et plantabitis vineas, et comedetis fructum earum.

31. Et adjiciet quod servatum erit e domo Iuda, quodque residuum erit, radicem jacere deorsum, et fructum proferre seorsum.

32. Nam e Ierusalem egredientur reliquiæ, et quod servatum erit e monte Zion. Zelus Iehovæ exercituum hoc faciet.

33. Propterea sic dicit Iehova de rege Assur: non ingredietur urbem hanc, neque projiciet illuc sagittam, et non occupabit eam clypeo munitus, neque fundet contra eam balistam.

34. Per viam qua venit revertetur, neque ingredietur urbem hanc, dicit Iehova.

35. Et protector ero super hanc urbem, ut servem eam, propter me et propter David servum meum.

36. Et egressus angelus Iehovæ percussit in castris Assyriorum centum octaginta quinque millia; et cum mane surrectum esset, ecce omnes cadavera mortuorum.

37. Tum profectus abiit, et reversus est Sennacherib rex Assur, et habitavit in Nineve.

38. Et accidit quum adoraret in templo Nisroch deum suum (*vel*, *dei sui*,) Adrammelech et Sarrezer filii ejus percusserunt eum gladio,

with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

fugeruntque in terram Armeniæ, et regnavit Essaradon filius ejus pro eo.

1. *And it came to pass.* The Prophet declares that the only hope of safety that was left to the pious king was to bring his complaints before God as a righteous judge; as it is said in the Psalm, that "in the same manner as servants or handmaids, when they are injured, look to the protection of their master or mistress, so the eyes of believers are fixed on the assistance of God." (Psalm cxxiii. 2.) Thus, when Jerusalem appears to be completely ruined, Hezekiah, being bereft of earthly assistance, betakes himself to the protection of God, and thus acknowledges that there is no other remedy for heavy distresses. Hence also the grace of God shone more brightly, so that it was evidently miraculous, when the pious king was rescued from the jaws of that lion. We ought, therefore, to observe this circumstance, that we may better understand the great excellence of the work of God. Here we are also taught what we ought to do in the most desperate circumstances, not to be indolent or sluggish in supplicating the assistance of God, who himself invites us to come to him. We must not tremble or despair, but, on the contrary, ought to be stimulated by the necessity which presses upon us to seek his aid; as we see what Hezekiah did, who immediately betook himself to the temple in the same manner as to a place of safety, that he and all his people might take refuge under the shadow of God.

That King Hezekiah rent his clothes. He likewise adds the outward expressions of repentance, the "rending of the clothes and wearing sackcloth," sprinkling of ashes, and other things of the same kind; for these were the ordinary signs of repentance, when, under the weight of any calamity by which they were afflicted, they confessed their guilt before God and implored pardon from him. Wonderful is the modesty of the holy king, who, after having performed so many illustrious works, and after having been adorned by the excellence of so many virtues, does not hesitate to prostrate himself humbly before God; and, on the other hand, wonderful is his courage and the steadfastness of his faith,

in not being hindered by the weight of so heavy a temptation from freely seeking God by whom he was so severely smitten. Scarcely do we find one man in a hundred who does not murmur if God treats him with any degree of severity, who does not bring forward his good deeds as a ground of complaint, and remonstrate that he has been unjustly rewarded. Other men, when God does not comply with their wishes, complain that their worship of God has served no good purpose.

We perceive nothing of this kind in Hezekiah, who, though he is conscious of possessing uncommon piety, does not shrink from a confession of guilt, and therefore if we desire to turn away God's anger, and to experience his favour in adversity, we must testify our repentance and sincerely acknowledge our guilt; for adversity does not fall out to us by chance, but is the method by which God arouses us to repentance. True, indeed, sackcloth and ashes will be of little avail, if they be not preceded by the inward feelings of the heart; for we know that hypocrites are abundantly liberal in the use of ceremonies; but as we have formerly said, the Holy Spirit justly commends those exercises, when they are directed to their proper object. And indeed it was a proof of uncommon piety and modesty, that the pious king and the whole nation excited themselves in this manner to fear God, and that he made a voluntary acknowledgment of guilt in a form attended by wretched filthiness; for we know how unwilling kings are to let themselves down from their rank.

2. *And he sent Eliakim.* This message was not intended merely to invite Isaiah to join with him in lamentation, but to request some consolation from his doctrine. And indeed to no purpose shall prayers be poured into the air, if they do not rest on the word of God. Thus we see that unbelievers are exceedingly noisy in their prayers, and yet they flee from God by despising or disregarding his promises. It was therefore a proof of sincere piety in Hezekiah, that, while he was earnestly employed in prayer, he at the same time added a confirmation of his hope, that he might not yield to temptation.

To Isaiah, the son of Amoz the Prophet. He follows the method appointed by God, when he wishes to hear God speaking by the mouth of "the Prophet." (Deut. xviii. 15; Mal. ii. 7.) Though he relies on God alone, he does not reject the testimony of a mortal man; and therefore not without reason does he expressly add the designation *Prophet;* for he sends to Isaiah, that he may be confirmed by some new prediction, and names him, not as a private individual, but as the servant of God, whose duty it was to soothe the pious king by some consolation.

There are therefore two remedies that deserve our attention, by which we are soothed in affliction. First, we ought to call on God to deliver us; and, secondly, we ought to consult the prophets, at least, if we can obtain them, that they may bring us some comfort out of the word of God; for it is their duty to encourage and comfort the afflicted by promises, and if they fail to do so, still abundant consolation is communicated to us from the word. And we ought to consult the prophets, who were appointed, not only for their own age, but also for posterity and for every age; for although the men are dead, yet their books survive; their doctrine lives and shall never die. We shall never, therefore, be destitute of true remedies, if we do not reject them; but, in a word, we ought always to consult God.

It may be asked, "Was not Hezekiah abundantly supplied and fortified by the promises of God? Was it not a sign of distrust to seek new promises from the Prophet?" I reply, it ought not to be ascribed to unbelief or distrust, that he seeks a new promise; for, being conscious of his weakness, he does not scruple to ask new confirmations. The flesh always excites us to distrust, and therefore we ought not to despise additional aid; on the contrary, we ought always to seek every kind of assistance, by which we may resist various temptations; for on all sides Satan attacks and besieges us in such a manner that, if we are not strongly fortified, we shall scarcely be able to escape his snares and devices till the end. Although, therefore, we have been taught by the word of God that he will assist us in adversity, yet when we are engaged in any arduous contest, it is proper that we

should again and again ask at the mouth of the Lord, and seek new confirmations for the purpose of strengthening our faith. There are indeed no prophecies of the same kind that are given to us in the present day; but we ought to apply to our use the general prophecies, which were also written for our benefit. (Rom. xv. 4.)

As to the reason why Hezekiah sent ambassadors, and did not himself go to Isaiah, it was obviously because he was praying in the Temple; for the circumstance, that all the elders and counsellors were clothed with sackcloth, shews clearly that the mourning was general; and it is probable that prayers were publicly offered by the command of the king. Yet it ought to be observed, that the Prophet did not remain at home for his own ease or pleasure, but by his absence God intended to try the faith of the pious king.

4. *If perhaps Jehovah thy God will hear.* Hezekiah appears to doubt whether or not the Lord is willing to hear him; for the particle אולי (*ūlai*) is translated *perhaps*, and this is the meaning which it frequently bears in Scripture. But it ought to be observed that believers, even though they know with certainty that the Lord will assist them, yet, in consequence of being perplexed by the difficulty of the case, often speak in this manner. Hezekiah had reasons for hesitating, if we look at the matter itself; but when he turns his eyes to the word, he is made certain as to the will of God, so that he ceases to tremble. But as it is impossible that the flesh should not retard believers by making them walk in a halting and staggering manner,[1] they sometimes accommodate their language to the present appearances of things.

It may also be observed, in other passages of Scripture, that the saints, even while speaking of what was certain, spoke in this manner; for Peter, in exhorting Simon, says, "*If perhaps* this thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." (Acts viii. 22.) He does not advise Simon to tremble and hesitate in prayer; for such a supplication would have been vain; but he points out the heinousness of the offence, that

[1] "Tellement qu'ils ne marchent qu'en trainant les jambes ou a clochepied." "So that they walk only by dragging their limbs or limping."

he may strike his mind more forcibly, and may at length constrain him to rouse himself that he may approach God with true repentance. This word *perhaps*, therefore, does not imply doubt, but is equivalent to an expression which we commonly use, *if it be possible*, when we venture to hope and promise to ourselves something. And Hezekiah did not speak as if God were deaf to the words of the ungodly, or as if anything escaped his notice; but because it was a fixed principle in his heart that "God is near to all that truly call upon him," (Psalm cxlv. 18,) he determines to strive against despondency, and arms himself by prayer; and because he does not expect to gain the conquest without difficulty, he says, *If perhaps.*[1] Besides, he mentions two kinds of hearing, which in some measure removes the difficulty.

If perhaps Jehovah thy God shall hear the words which Jehovah thy God hath heard. At first sight there is some apparent contradiction in these words; but the manner of speaking is highly appropriate, because Hezekiah was assuredly and beyond all controversy convinced that nothing is hidden from God; only he argues with himself on this point, whether or not God determines to call in question the blasphemy of this filthy dog; because frequently he delays and conceals vengeance for a time, and thus seems to shut his eyes and overlook it. In short, taking for granted that "all things are open and manifest to God," (Heb. iv. 13,) he only asks with earnestness whether or not God actually shews that he is so highly offended by the blasphemies of Rabshakeh that he determines not to allow them to remain unpunished. In a word, he wishes God to hear effectually, that is, by restoring those things which were scattered and confused, and shewing himself to be a judge; for then do we know that he actually sees and observes all things. In this manner Hezekiah asks, "Hath not the Lord heard the blasphemies of Rabshakeh, to take vengeance on them, and to shew that he hath a regard to the glory of his name?"

Jehovah thy God. By calling him "the God of Isaiah," Hezekiah does not mean that there is only one man who worships God, nor does he exclude himself from the number

[1] "Paraventure, ou possible." "Perhaps, or possible."

of the godly; but because prayers flowed from doctrine, the pious king wished to speak in commendation of the ministry of the Prophet, and to testify that he was a true servant of God. That relation is somewhat more extensive; for all believers call on God, and, on the other hand, God reckons them among his people; but God is reckoned in a peculiar manner to be the God of Isaiah and Paul, because they have a special calling. In a word, these words expressly contain praise and commendation of Isaiah's calling.

Thou wilt therefore lift up a prayer. This is the second reason why Hezekiah sent messengers to Isaiah; namely, that he also would pray along with others. Hence we learn that it is the duty of a prophet, not only to comfort the afflicted by the word of the Lord, but also to offer his prayers for their salvation. Let not pastors and ministers of the word, therefore, think that they have fully discharged their duty, when they have exhorted and taught, if they do not also add prayer. This indeed is what all ought to do; but Hezekiah sent to Isaiah in a particular manner, because he ought to lead the way to others by his example. Besides, "to lift up a prayer" is nothing else than "to pray," but the mode of expression deserves attention; for it shews how our feelings ought to be regulated when we pray. Scripture everywhere enjoins us to "lift up our hearts to heaven," (Lam. iii. 41;) for otherwise we would have no fear of God. Moreover, our stupidity is so great that we are immediately seized by gross imaginations of God; so that if he did not bid us look to heaven, we would choose rather to seek him at our feet. "To lift up a prayer," therefore, is to pray in such a manner that our hearts may not grovel on the earth, or think anything earthly or gross about God, but may ascribe to him what is suitable to his majesty, and that our warm and earnest affections may take a lofty flight. In this sense it is said in the Psalm, "Let my prayer come up before thee as incense, and as the evening sacrifice." (Psalm cxli. 2.)

For the remnant that is still left. When he desires that prayer should be offered "for the remnant of the people that was left," this circumstance was fitted powerfully to move

the Lord; not that he is moved after the manner of men, but he acts towards us in this manner, and accommodates himself to our weakness. Thus when our affairs are brought to such an extremity that we are not far from destruction, we ought to spread our misery before God, that our minds may receive some consolation; for God declares that he hath regard to "the poor and afflicted." (Psalm xxii. 24.) And the nearer we appear to be to destruction, so much the more warmly and earnestly ought we to implore that he would render assistance to us, as we see here that Hezekiah did when matters were desperate.

5. *And the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.* As the Prophet formerly related that the pious king had no other refuge than to consult the mouth of the Lord, so he now shews that he did not consult in vain; for he received the consolation which he desired. Instructed by this example, if we seek relief from him by pouring our cares and anxieties into the bosom of God, our hope shall never be disappointed; and although there will not always be prophets in the world, such as Isaiah was, yet he will come forth seasonably to render assistance in an appropriate manner.

6. *Thus saith Jehovah.* Isaiah begins by saying that he gives the reply in the name of God, and expressly declares that the oracle comes from God, both because prophets ought always to beware of bringing forward anything of their own, and because in so difficult a matter the authority of God was needful. In this manner also, the Prophet shewed that he met the prayers of the pious king. Even false prophets, indeed, boast of the name of God, but falsely. Isaiah was truly the organ of the Holy Spirit, and therefore he has a right to mention the holy name of Him that sent him.

Fear not. When he bids him "not fear," he exhorts Hezekiah to be of a courageous or, at least, a calm disposition. Whenever we hear this word, let us be reminded that we are enjoined to cultivate that peace which faith produces in our hearts; for all who trust in God, and expect from him deliverance from their distresses, rise superior to all fears by

the exercise of patience, so that even in the midst of affliction they have peace. Besides, in order that the pious king may continue cheerfully to expect a joyful issue, he plainly declares that God conducts his own cause which he has undertaken to defend, because he cannot permit wicked men unpunished to dishonour his name without making it appear at length that he is a righteous judge.[1]

The servants of the king of Assyria. By calling them *servants*, he presents in a stronger light the baseness of the action; for although the king himself had spoken in this manner, still it would have been intolerable that the Lord should be despised and so shamefully attacked by a mortal man. Hence it might easily be concluded that much less would he endure to be so highly insulted by "servants,"[2] and therefore the rank of the person increases the heinousness of the attack.

7. *Behold, I will bring a wind upon him.* Others translate it, "I will put my Spirit in him," as if the Prophet were speaking of a secret influence of the heart; but that is a forced interpretation. It is a highly appropriate metaphor that there is in the hand of God a wind or whirlwind to drive Sennacherib in another direction. To compare wicked men to "straw or chaff" (Psalm i. 4) is a mode of expression frequently employed in Scripture, because God easily drives them wherever he thinks proper, when they think that they are standing very firm. The commotion that arose in the kingdom of Sennacherib is compared by the Prophet to a "wind" or "storm" which drove him out of Judea, and then he shews that the Lord will find no more difficulty in repelling that enemy than if he wished to move straw or chaff; and the very same thing might be said of all tyrants, however powerful.

For he shall hear a report. The words "and he shall

[1] "En les punissant." "By punishing them."

[2] "The word translated *servants*, is not the same with that in the preceding verse, but strictly means young men or boys, and is so translated in the *Targ.* and *Vulg.* Many interpreters regard it as a contemptuous description, and it is so translated by Hitzig, (*knappen*, attendants,) Umbreit, (*buben*, boys or lads,) Henderson, (striplings,) and in other modern versions."—*Alexander.*

hear" are evidently added for the sake of explanation, and therefore I have chosen to interpret them as assigning a reason, "For he shall hear."[1] This is the wind by the raising of which Sennacherib was suddenly driven away; for a report which he heard about the kings of Egypt and Ethiopia constrained him to return to his own country.

And I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. This means as if he had said, "He now annoys and harasses others, and endeavours to extend widely the limits of his empire; but I will raise up enemies to him, in the very bosom of his own land, who shall discomfit him." Some expound it to mean the land of Israel, but that is an excessively forced interpretation; for he speaks of the land of the king of Assyria himself, and there is an implied contrast, "He who subdued other men's cities and kingdoms shall not be able to defend his own country, but shall be destroyed and perish in it."

8. *And Rabshakeh having returned.* He now declares how Rabshakeh, without doing anything, returned to his king, not to the same place where he had left him; for he understood that he had raised the siege of Lachish, and had departed into Egypt for the purpose of attacking Libnah. Some think that this city is Pelusium, others choose rather to assign it to Judea. It is, indeed, probable that, in consequence of a report that reached him about the approach of enemies, he moved his camp towards Egypt, that by meeting them he might prevent them from advancing. Though God restrained the violence of the tyrant by a new war, in order to give some relief to the Jews, yet he did not wish to conquer the tyrant by the hand of man, but only to shew openly and, as it were, to display on a theatre his unconquerable pride; because, even when he was in great danger, he did not cease to vomit out the same blasphemies, as we shall soon see.

9. *And hearing concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia.* From what follows we may conjecture the reason why the

[1] ἀκούσας ἀγγελίαν, "having heard a message." "Havendo inteso un certo grido," "having heard a certain noise."—*Ital.* "Und ſoll etwas hören," "and shall hear something."—*Luth. Germ.*

king of Assyria suddenly departed from Judea ; for the kings of Egypt and Ethiopia had formed a league with each other against Sennacherib, because they saw that his power was becoming excessive, and that his invasion of other countries had no limit, and therefore they readily concluded that, unless they opposed his violence at an early period, they also would be in imminent danger from him. These kings did not intend to provide for the safety of Judea at their own loss, but looked to themselves ; for so great power possessed by one individual is commonly and deservedly viewed with suspicion by other princes and nations. They therefore act wisely in joining their forces and meeting him early ; for separately they would easily have been subdued and destroyed. For this reason these two kings took arms together, in order to repel the power and violence of that tyrant.

He sent messengers to Hezekiah. The king of Assyria, being involved in so hazardous a war, "sends messengers to Hezekiah," to induce him by terrors and threatenings to surrender ; for tyrants are maddened by ambition and by a false opinion of their own greatness, and therefore imagine that their words, the report of their name, and even their shadow, will strike terror into all men. Entangled in a hazardous war, he thinks of subduing Judea, from which he had been compelled to withdraw, ashamed of not having continued the siege, but perhaps thinking that he will gain in his absence what he could not accomplish by his presence. But the Lord miraculously assisted his people who appeared to be very near destruction. And, first, in order to restrain the violence of this tyrant, he presented hinderances and obstructions, from which he could not so speedily extricate himself ; just as if one should "lay a bridle on the mouth or a hook on the nose" of a wild and savage beast, as the Prophet will afterwards say. (Ver. 29.) His rage and cruelty, indeed, are not abated, but are restrained so that they can do no harm.

We see the same thing in the present day. How many cruel tyrants would wish that the Church of God were destroyed ! What schemes are employed for the accomplishment of it ! How diversified are the plans which they

form! What forces do they assemble from every quarter! But when they think that they will accomplish anything, the Lord suddenly raises up enemies against them, sometimes even brings them to fight with each other, and turns against themselves that cruelty which they wished to exercise against the children of God. Yet they go on in their cruelty, and cease not to attempt this or that; as this Sennacherib, though he is surrounded by difficulties, ceases not to annoy Hezekiah, and addresses him from his royal throne, as if he were a despicable slave, and commands him as if he were his vassal, and even to God himself addresses insolent and opprobrious language, and goes beyond his agent Rabshakeh in arrogance; for, although Rabshakeh's words had the same meaning, still this man, in a more impudent manner, and, as we may say, with more open mouth reviles God.

10. *Let not thy God deceive thee.* How shocking is this blasphemy, to speak of God the Author of truth, and to accuse him of falsehood and deceit, as if he actually imposed on his people! What is left to God when his truth is taken away, for nothing is more absolutely his own? God extorted this word from the wicked man, although he formerly pretended to revere some deity; for such impiety, as we have formerly said, God does not permit to remain any longer concealed.

Saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered. This quotation of the words uttered by God himself, that "Jerusalem would be preserved," has led some to conjecture that Isaiah's prediction had been disclosed to the king of Assyria by the traitor Shebna. But there is no need of such conjectures; for the Assyrian knew well that Hezekiah placed his hope in God, and was not ignorant of the promises which were made both to him and to David, "This is my rest; here will I dwell for ever and ever." (Psalm cxxxii. 14.) Not that he gave himself any trouble about heavenly oracles, but because every person knew and talked of them, and the Jews gloried in them wonderfully, and often boasted of the assistance and protection of God in opposition to their enemies.

These promises, therefore, the tyrant meets by this blas-

phemy,—"Let not thy God deceive thee." And thus he exalts himself against God, as if God were not sufficiently powerful to defend Jerusalem, and as if his own power were greater, not only than all the power of men, but even than the power of God himself. He endeavours to prove this by examples, because he has vanquished nations which were under the protection of other gods, and draws an argument from the power of his ancestors,—"They conquered the gods of other nations, and I am far superior to my ancestors; therefore the God of Israel will not conquer me."

Thus do wicked men commonly exalt themselves more and more in prosperity, so that at length they forget that they are men, and not only claim for themselves, but even think that they surpass, Divine Majesty. Setting aside all distinction between right and wrong, satisfied with the mere power of doing injury, they glory in their own crimes and those of their ancestors, and egregiously flatter themselves on the ground of their being descended from robbers and infamous men; for frequently the most powerful of monarchs is the best entitled to be called the rich son of a great robber. This tyrant does not consider whether it was in a right or a wrong manner that so many countries came into the power of his ancestors; for they have no regard to justice or injustice, when they aim at greatness; it is enough for them if in any way, either lawful or unlawful, they can bring others under their yoke. Thus they think that they are at liberty to do whatever they can. They hold by that proverb, (*εἰ ἀδικητέον, τυραννίδος περὶ ἀδικητέον,*) "if justice ought to be violated, it ought to be violated for the sake of reigning;" and this vice was not peculiar to a single age, but even now we feel it to be excessive.

11. *Behold, thou hast heard.* Here we ought to observe a twofold comparison; for he compares Hezekiah to other kings of Judah who preceded him, because he was inferior to them, and yet they were vanquished by the kings of Assyria; and Sennacherib, on the other hand, having obtained greater power than all the rest, is more daring and insolent. It followed, that Hezekiah could not resist him. The other comparison is that of the kings of Assyria, and

Sennacherib himself, with the idols of the nations ; for if the idols could not protect the nations that adored them, consequently neither will the God of Israel defend the nation by which he is adored.

When we thus read that singular assaults of temptations were directed against the faith of Hezekiah, let us prepare ourselves for the contest by being equipped with the same armour. Even while leisure is granted to us, let us endeavour to fortify ourselves early, in order that, when we come into such a field of battle, we may fight courageously. And if Satan taunt us with the destruction of many nations, we must attend to the difference of our condition ; because, although we are liable to similar calamities, still we have assured hope of our salvation, of which they are destitute.

12. *Gozan.* This place is mentioned in 2 Kings xvii. 6, and xviii. 11. We may infer that it was a town in Media, though some think that it was situated elsewhere ; but it is enough that, with regard to Jerusalem, it lay in an easterly direction. *Haran* is often mentioned in Scripture. Pliny places this town in Arabia ; but it is more generally believed to have been in Mesopotamia, and this is confirmed by the journeyings of Abraham, who came to it along with his father, after having left his native country Chaldæa. (Acts vii. 2-4 ; Gen. xi. 31.) It is called Charræ, in the plural number, by heathen historians, who also mention that Crassus and his son were killed there.

14. *Hezekiah took the letters.* The Prophet now shews what kind of refuge Hezekiah had amidst so great calamities. He immediately went into the Temple, to lament before the Lord the calamity which he could not remove, and to "cast upon him" (Psalm lv. 22) his grief and his anxieties.[1] Nor was this a blind or confused lamentation, but the pious king wished to move God by his tears and complaints to render assistance. We are taught by his example that, when we are sore pressed, there is nothing better than to cast our burden into the bosom of God. All other methods of relief will be of no avail, if this single method be wanting.

[1] "Et jetter au sein d'iceluy sa tristesse et solicitude." "And to pour into his bosom his grief and anxiety."

And spread them before Jehovah. In "spreading the letters before the Lord," he does not do this as if the Lord did not know what was contained in the letters, but God allows us to act in this manner towards him in accommodation to our weakness. Neither prayers, nor tears, nor complaints make known to God what we need; for he "knows our wants and necessities before we ask anything from him." (Matt. vi. 8.) But here we ought rather to consider what is necessary for us, that is, that God should manifest that he knows the blasphemies of adversaries, and that they who have uttered them will not remain unpunished. The reason and design, therefore, why Hezekiah "spread before the Lord the letters" of the wicked tyrant was this, that he might excite his own earnestness, and inflame his own ardour, in prayer.

15. *Then Hezekiah prayed to God, saying, O Jehovah of hosts.* Because Sennacherib was the agent employed by Satan to shake the faith of Hezekiah, he defends himself by this rampart, that God possesses infinite power; for, by bestowing on God those lofty praises, he undoubtedly encourages himself to confidence in supplication. That our prayers may not be unsuccessful, we ought always to hold it as certain that God "is the rewarder of all who seek him." (Heb. xi. 6.) It was especially necessary for the pious king, that he might boldly and undauntedly remove the obstruction by which Satan had attempted to stop the progress of his confidence, to believe that although wicked men mock and undervalue the power of God, still it remains undiminished. The heroic courage of the pious king appeared by not only contending with a wicked king in maintaining the power of God, but by exalting it in his own heart and appealing to God as the witness of his inward feelings. Accordingly, before forming any prayer, he overturns the delusions by which Satan had endeavoured to shake his courage.

16. *Thou alone art God over all the kingdoms of the earth.* Not only does he assert God's almighty power, but likewise maintains the authority which he exercises over the whole world. And these statements are made by the pious king for the purpose of strengthening himself in the faith which

he entertained about the providence of God, by which he governs the world and every part of it. All believers ought above all to believe this, that they may not think that they pray in vain. Nor would the prayer of the king have had so much efficacy if he had only said, "Incline thine ear, O Lord," or something of that sort, as when he believes that the Lord takes care of his works. He persuades himself that God will undertake that cause. If it belongs to God to rule and govern the whole world, he will not permit this tyrant to act in this insolent manner without restraining his insolence; for Sennacherib claims for himself what belonged to God, and at length would not pass unpunished.

The statement, that all the kingdoms of the earth are under the power and authority of God, applies especially to the present subject. Yet while this title always belongs to God alone, that he "rules over all kingdoms," still the Prophet does not deny that kings also, and princes, and magistrates hold their dominion, but so as to be subject to God, and to owe to him all their power and authority. In like manner, when Paul asserts that government belongs to God alone, (1 Tim. vi. 15,) he does not overthrow princes and magistrates, but shews that all, how great and powerful soever they may be, depend on God alone, that they may not imagine themselves to be his equals or companions, but may acknowledge him as their Lord and Prince. Thus will kings, therefore, retain their authority, if they keep an intermediate position between God and men, and do not wish to rise higher.

Thou hast made heaven and earth. Hezekiah draws the same inference from creation itself; for it is impossible that God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth, should forsake his work; on the contrary, he governs by his providence the human race, which is the chief part of the world. It would be absurd to confine creation within such narrow boundaries as if it were a proof of a sudden and transitory exercise of the power of God; but we must extend it to perpetual government. Hence it is evident that tyrants who wish to rule at their pleasure rob God of his honour, and therefore are justly punished for their insolence.

O Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel, who dwellest between the Cherubim. Here are other titles employed by Hezekiah for the confirmation of his faith. And, first, by calling him "Jehovah of hosts," he again extols his power. But when he adds "God of Israel," he brings him near, and on familiar terms; for it was no ordinary token of love to take that nation under his protection. Such is also the import of "sitting between the cherubim;" as if he had said, "Thou hast here placed thy seat, and promised that thou wilt be the protector of those who call upon thee before the ark of the covenant. Relying on this promise, I flee to thee as my guardian."

Hezekiah had in view, I have no doubt, the form of the ark, which was surrounded by two cherubim. Others interpret Cherubim to mean angels, as if it were said, that God reigneth in heaven and sitteth among the angels. But this interpretation is unsuitable; for he is said to "sit between the cherubim," on account of the form of the ark, which was constructed in this manner. (Exod. xxv. 18.) We know that it was a symbol of the presence of God, though his power was not confined to it; and Hezekiah, by mentioning it, intended to express his firm belief that God was present with him, and had designed to gather a people to himself by spreading, so to speak, his wings over them. There being a wide distance between God and us, Hezekiah embraced that token of adoption. Yet there was nothing gross or earthly in his conceptions of God, as superstitious men would desire to bring him down from heaven, but, satisfied with the promise which he had received, he expresses his firm belief that we do not need to go far to seek the grace of God.

This mode of expression, therefore, deserves our attention, and teaches us, that while we gradually ascend to heaven by the light of the word which leads the way, still, in order to obtain assistance, we must not think of God as absent; for he has chosen his dwelling in the midst of us. Since his majesty far exceeds heaven and earth, we must not limit him within the capacity of our understanding; and yet, as he has revealed himself to us by the word, we may comprehend him in proportion to the small ability and measure of our

understanding, not that we may bring him down from his heavenly throne, but that our understandings, which are naturally feeble and sluggish, may approach to him by degrees; for it is proper that we should strive to approach to his loftiness, since he invites us by the Word and sacraments. If we are skilful interpreters, the spiritual knowledge of God will always flourish among us; we shall not give the name of God to stones, or wood, or trees; there will be nothing earthly or gross in our conceptions of him; but the nearer he comes down to us, the more earnestly shall we labour to make a proper use of those aids which he holds out, that our minds may not grovel on the earth; since God accommodates himself to our weakness for no other reason than that the sacraments may serve to us the purpose of ladders,[1] which superstition abuses for a contrary purpose.

17. *Incline thine ear, O Jehovah.* From these words we conclude how great was the perplexity of Hezekiah; for the earnestness that pervades the prayer breathes an amazing power of anguish, so that it is easily seen that he had a struggle attended by uncommon difficulty to escape from the temptation. Though his warmth in prayer shews the strength and eminence of his faith, yet at the same time it exhibits, as in a mirror, the stormy passions. Whenever we shall be called to sustain such contests, let us learn by the example of the pious king to combat our passions by everything that is fitted to strengthen our faith, so that the very disturbance may conduct us to safety and peace, and that we may not be terrified by a conviction of our weakness, if at any time we shall be powerfully assailed by fear and perplexity. It is, indeed, the will of the Lord that we shall toil hard, and sweat and shiver; for we must not expect to gain the victory while we repose in indolence, but after diversified contests he promises to us a prosperous issue, which he will undoubtedly grant.

But why does Hezekiah demand that God should listen? Does he think that he is asleep or does not hear? By no means; but in a matter of such difficulty we frequently speak in such a manner as if we thought that God was ab-

[1] D'escheles.

sent or did not attend to our afflictions. He shews that he was oppressed by so great perplexity that he almost thought that God had forsaken him ; that is, according to the eyes of the flesh ; for if he had not by the eyes of faith beheld God as present, he would have lost courage.

Open thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see. It is as if Hezekiah had prayed that the assistance of God, which he had long kept in his heart committed to the guardianship of hope, would be actually and publicly manifested ; and therefore he prays that Jehovah would "open his eyes and see ;" that is, would shew that he cares about these matters. Hezekiah shews plainly what was the subject about which he was most anxious, namely, that God would revenge the insults offered to him ; for although he was deeply affected by anxiety about his kingdom and people, yet he set a higher value on the glory of God than on all other sources of uneasiness. The advancement of that glory ought, indeed, above all things, to move and impress our hearts, and the more especially because we know that it is closely connected with our salvation.

Thus Hezekiah here represents this tyrant as an enemy of God, who dishonours him by reproaches and curses because Jerusalem glories in his name and protection, and concludes that God cannot forsake the city which he hath undertaken to defend, without at the same time abandoning his own name. Since, therefore, God in his infinite goodness chooses to connect our salvation with his glory, we ought to lay hold on those promises for the purpose of strengthening our hearts, that although the wicked, while they reproach God and pour and vomit out the venom of their breast, harden themselves in the vain hope that they shall not be punished, still there will not be a syllable which the Lord does not hear, and which he does not at length call to account.

18 and 19. *Truly, O Jehovah.* Here Hezekiah begins to distinguish between the false gods and the true God, which we also ought to do very carefully. Wicked men, who have no light, indulge in some confused imaginations about God, which quickly pass away, so that they think that there is no God, or care nothing about him.[1] But God does not wish

[1] "Encor qu'il y en ait un." "Though there be a God."

that his people shall be moved by a slight and passing opinion, but that he shall be acknowledged by them as the true God, who drives away all superstitions by the brightness of his power.[1] It is not enough, therefore, that we believe in something which heathens imagine to be a deity, but we must believe in God in such a manner as to distinguish him from pretended gods, and to separate truth from falsehood; and, indeed, when he has once shone into our hearts, those false religions which formerly occupied our minds immediately give way.

This doctrine ought to be the more carefully held, because many persons rest satisfied with dark speculations, and think that it is enough if they acknowledge some deity. They evidently do not know whether they ought to worship the God of the Mahometans or of the Jews; and fly in the air, so that, as the saying is, they neither touch heaven nor earth. Nothing can be more destructive than this imagination; for it mingles and confounds idols with God, whose majesty does not hold its due rank, if it does not reign in solitary grandeur over the ruins of all the false gods. Thus the beginning of true piety is, that from the whole multitude of false gods we shall wisely distinguish that one God to whom we ought to be entirely devoted.

For they are not gods, but the work of the hands of man, wood and stone. By two arguments Hezekiah shews that "they were not gods;" first, because they consisted of matter,[2] and secondly, because they were formed by the hands of men. Nothing can be more absurd than for a man to assume the right to create a god, not only because he had a beginning, while God is eternal, but because not even for a single moment does he subsist by his own power. Let the whole world collect all its strength into a single man,[3] he will not even be able to create a flea. What presumption is it, therefore, that every mortal man shall make for himself

[1] "Dechassant par la splendeur de sa vertu toutes tenebres d'ignorance." "Who drives away by the brightness of his power all the darkness of ignorance."

[2] "D'autant qu'ils estoyent de matiere corruptible." "Because they were of corruptible matter."

[3] "En un seul homme."

either one god or many![1] Since, therefore, there is nothing in us but what is frail and fading, we shall never be able to produce a deity.

Besides, it is in the highest degree absurd to attempt, as an exercise of skill, to frame some deity out of matter which is corruptible and devoid of feeling, as if "wood or stone," whenever it received a shape, began to be a god. In this manner, therefore, all the superstitions that men have ever invented are speedily overturned; for the existence of those gods can be found nowhere but in their own brains, and, indeed, all that they have of themselves contrived is condemned as empty and false.

20. *And now, O Jehovah our God.* At the conclusion of his prayer, the pious king now rises above that fear with which he had struggled; for the aids by which he had hitherto fortified himself undoubtedly encouraged him boldly to add this short clause. Although God does not always deliver his people from temporal evils, yet as he had promised that he would be the protector of the city, Hezekiah could firmly believe that all the efforts of that wicked tyrant, which were directed to the destruction of that city, would be fruitless.

May know that thou alone art Jehovah. When he pleads it as an argument with God that the deliverance of the city will be an occasion of promoting his glory, we conclude that nothing is more desirable than to make his name glorious in every possible way; and this is even the chief design of our salvation, from which we are not at liberty to depart, if we desire that God should be gracious to us. Hence we conclude that those men are unworthy of his assistance, who, satisfied with their own salvation, disregard or forget the reason why God chooses to preserve them. Not only do they dishonour God by this ingratitude, but they likewise inflict grievous injury on themselves, by separating those things which God had joined; for in saving his people he glorifies his name, which must be, as we have already said, our highest consolation. Besides, Hezekiah does not only

[1] "Quel orgueil est-ce donc que le premier qui voudra mettre la main à la besogne se face autant de dieux que bon luy semblera!" "What presumption is it then that whoever shall first put his hand to the work shall make as many gods as he thinks proper!"

desire that the God of Israel shall hold a certain rank, but that all idols shall be abolished, and that he shall reign *alone;* for at that time many idolaters would have allowed him to be worshipped along with others, but, since he does not admit companions, every deity framed by the hand of man must be destroyed, that He may hold the undivided sovereignty.

21. *Then Isaiah sent to Hezekiah.* This shews the result of the prayer; for, as soon as matters have come to an extremity, God suddenly holds out his hand to assist the pious king by the Prophet Isaiah. (2 Kings xix. 20.) Not that he immediately stretches out his arm to drive away the enemies, but he promises deliverance by the mouth of the Prophet, and thus calls even now into exercise the faith of his servant. Isaiah undoubtedly could not of himself render any assistance, and therefore it would have been foolish for him to promise this or that, if Hezekiah had not been convinced that God had sent him. Thus, until God should give a manifestation of his power, he rested satisfied with this consolation.

Thus saith Jehovah the God of Israel. Here we are taught that we ought always to ask at the mouth of God, if we wish to obtain any alleviation in our anxieties and distresses; for if we reject the doctrine which he communicates to us by the hand of faithful teachers, we are utterly unworthy of receiving any consolation. Fed and nourished by it, we ought to make continual progress, and to seek from it new confirmations, that new remedies may be constantly found for new distresses, and that we may never be destitute of consolation even amidst the sharpest afflictions; for even they whose resources and means of defence are most extensive cannot be too abundantly supplied with this doctrine. In Hezekiah a striking instance of faith and steadfastness is here exhibited; and yet the Lord does not merely comfort him once or only by a single prophecy, but confirms him by many prophecies, in order that we, who are far removed from such steadfastness, may know that we need many and various aids, to give uninterrupted support to our faith.

Since thou hast prayed to me. In the sacred history

(2 Kings xix. 20) the word *I have heard,* is used; and consequently in that passage אשר (*ăshĕr*) is a relative pronoun; but here, as in many other passages, it is introduced either for the sake of explanation or in assigning a reason.[1] To supply the word *I have heard,* as some commentators do, is harsh and unnatural; and the sentence flows on in unbroken connection, when God declares that he grants it as an answer to the prayers of Hezekiah, that he will frustrate all the efforts of the tyrant, and restrain his violence and rage; as if he had said, that God's answer corresponded to the prayers of the pious king. And, indeed, whoever addresses prayers to him will at length experience how ready he is to answer; but very frequently he is silent, and offers no consolation from his word, because amidst our distresses we are dumb.

Concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. The prediction amounts to this, that there is no reason why Hezekiah, under a consciousness of destitution and weakness, should faint or despair, when he sees the insolence of this haughty tyrant; because God will interpose between them. Sennacherib having offered those insults to the wretched Jews, God declares that he takes this cause into his own hands, because the affront was directed against himself. By these words he shews that he will take vengeance, when his grace is despised by unbelievers; and he advises believers not to be greatly distressed on account of their being despised by the world, provided that their weakness finds assistance ready prepared in heaven.

22. *The virgin daughter of Zion.* There is greater emphasis in this address to the whole Church than if he had said the same thing to Hezekiah as a private individual; for this circumstance heightens the baseness of treating with scorn the defencelessness of a wretched people, as if the aid of heaven had been of no avail. Thus he censures the blindness of Sennacherib, in disregarding God and haughtily despising an afflicted Church. Cities are frequently called *daughters.* (Ps. ix. 14.) Sometimes also, as we have formerly seen, delicate cities are called *virgins.* (Is. i. 8, and xxiii. 12.) But here he intended to express the weakness of the city of Jeru-

[1] That is, it means either *since* or *because.*—*Ed.*

salem, because she was like an orphan and destitute *virgin*, who was insulted by this base ruffian and infamous robber; while God, as the father to whom this insult is offered, declares that he knows well what are the schemes of that wicked man, and what is the condition of the whole of Judea.

23. *Whom hast thou reproached?* In the former verse he describes the fact, such as it might be seen and beheld by all; but now he raises their minds higher, by shewing that this tyrant insults not only Jerusalem but God himself. Let this passage be brought to our remembrance, whenever we see ourselves exposed to the taunts and insolence of wicked men; for, though we have no armour, and though no one undertakes our defence, and though our weakness prompts our enemies to growing insolence, yet the Lord is near and will defend us as with an ample shield, for they who fight against us wage war with the living God. Nor were these words spoken merely for the sake of a single age, but on the contrary, as this promise is perpetual, "I will be thy God and thy shield," (Genesis xv. 1, and xvii. 7,) "I will be a friend to thy friends, and an adversary to thy adversaries," (Genesis xii. 3; Exodus xxiii. 22,) so the less strength that is left to us, let us be more fully convinced that the power of God is close at hand. Since therefore the Lord hath entered into covenant with us on the condition of undertaking our cause, let us not doubt that he will actually fulfil it, and will shew that the insults which are offered to us are offered to himself. In a word, he is joined to us in such a manner that he wishes all that belongs to him and to us to be in common.

Besides, those reproaches which Sennacherib had thrown out against the Church God applies to himself, in order to shew that wicked men are greatly mistaken when they are proud of their greatness, as if they would escape punishment for treading on the Church, because she is lying at their feet. We know that they treat with contempt the providence of God; and especially when they see believers groaning under the yoke, they think them unworthy of receiving assistance from God, who therefore rises up and testifies that the contempt shewn to his poor flock grieves him as much

as if his majesty were openly dishonoured. Although, therefore, enemies think that we are forsaken by God when they see us destitute of earthly resources, and on that account commit grosser outrage, as if we were given to them for a prey, yet, on the other hand, God declares that our salvation is dear and precious to him.

Against whom hast thou raised thy voice? The Prophet employs a variety of terms in describing the disdain and insolence of this haughty man, as one who in speech, in face, in gesture, in his eyes, and, in short, in the whole attitude of his body, was absolutely intolerable; for tyrants, having such an opinion of themselves, assume such airs and look down on every one else as if they had fallen down from heaven.

Against the Holy One of Israel. At length he adds, that, although the affairs of the nation are at a low ebb, still God, under whose protection they are placed, remains in heaven as powerful as ever. He thus censures the madness of Sennacherib in judging of a nation from earthly appearances, and not considering that they were dedicated and consecrated to God. In order, therefore, that we may remain safe through the power of God, and that his arm may give us seasonable aid, we must be his *Israel;* which will be the case if, relying on his word, we "recline under the shadow of his wings." (Psalm xxxvi. 7.)

24. *By the hand of thy servants.* This also heightens the baseness and cruelty of the insult, for it is harder to bear reproaches from a servant than from his master, the insult being rendered more grievous by the meanness of the person. Hence also proud and insolent men, in order to render their threatenings more galling and offensive, boast that they will do this or that by one of their servants or footmen, for the purpose of testifying more strongly their contemptuous feelings towards those whom they hate. The Prophet therefore intended to represent more strongly the baseness of the blasphemy by this circumstance, that Sennacherib had not only vomited it out of his own mouth, but had employed "his servant" Rabshakeh to utter scornful language against the holy name of God.

I will ascend the heights of the mountains, the sides of Lebanon. What he now repeats as having been spoken by Sennacherib, some understand to relate generally to former victories which he had gained, and by which, as we have already said, he had vanquished many nations. But I choose rather to take a more simple view, and to interpret it as relating to the present siege. Perceiving almost the whole of Judea subjected to his power, having taken possession of the hills which surrounded that country on all sides, he swells with insolence as if he had gained a complete victory, and threatens that he will take within his grasp those battlements and Mount Lebanon, with its cedars and firs and other attractions; as if he had said that nothing shall hinder him from taking possession of the bulwarks, castles, and best fortified places, and wielding the whole of Judea at his pleasure. Thus do tyrants, though they acknowledge that war is doubtful, still dream of having in their power the successful results of battles.

25. *I shall dig and drink water.* The tyrant still goes on to boast of his strength, and threatens that he will bring so powerful an army that by means of their numbers he will dry up all the fountains and rivers. Yet, when he says, "With the sole of my feet I shall dry up all the lakes of the siege," by *the lakes of the siege*[1] some understand the fountain of Siloah, and the cisterns and pools of which the besieged Jews could not be deprived without being consumed by thirst. And, indeed, in the former clause he appears to say that, though the whole country were dry, still he does not dread a scarcity of water, because his vast military forces will be abundantly able to dig wells. In the second clause he adds, that he will have at his command the means of drying up all the waters of the city, so as to slay the Jews by thirst. In short, he means that Jerusalem will be unable to resist the siege, and will not be able to stand out any longer, but must immediately surrender. But while wicked men thus vaunt, God sits in heaven, from which he will at length execute judgment against them; for this narrative of

[1] The rivers of besieged places.—(Eng. Ver.)

the Prophet is intended to lead us to consider the stupendous judgment of God against that tyrant.

26. *Hast thou not heard?* The greater part of commentators explain this verse as if the Lord declared that nothing was now done, or had formerly been done by this tyrant, which he had not foretold by the mouth of the Prophet, and thus affirmed that he was the author of those things. But I explain it in a different manner, which is, that Jerusalem will be preserved by the assistance of God, because he is the protector of it.

That I made it long ago. For the sake of giving greater emphasis, he suppresses the name of the city, and employs the demonstrative pronoun *it*, as if all other cities had been of no value in the sight of God.[1] Others view the pronoun *it* as referring to the deliverance which depended on the secret decree of God; but whoever examines judiciously the design and words of the Prophet, will acknowledge that *it* rather denotes Jerusalem. God had complained that he was dishonoured by base reproaches; and yet, in repeating the words of Sennacherib, he mentioned only "Lebanon" and the adjacent country. In order now to shew that under the name "Lebanon" war has been declared against himself, he affirms, as in many other passages of Scripture, that Jerusalem was founded by his own hand and built by his direction, and therefore that, until he was conquered, Sennacherib could not overthrow it.

This doctrine is found everywhere, and frequently repeated in the Scriptures, (Psalm xlviii. 8; lxxviii. 69; lxxxvii. 5; Isaiah xiv. 32,) and contains a remarkable consolation, by which the godly may be sustained amidst the severest afflictions that can befall them; and that consolation is, that they will continually be under God's protection, because he has elected them. He employs this argument, "I have founded the Church, and therefore the salvation of the Church shall always be my care; because I will not leave unfinished the work which I have begun, but will carry it forward to per-

[1] "Comme si toutes les autres villes n'estoyent rien devant Dieu au pris de ceste-ci." "As if all other cities were nothing before God in comparison of this."

fection." In short, the Lord testifies that he defends and preserves his work, because it involves his honour and our salvation. Yet he is called "the maker of the Church," in a different sense from that in which he is commonly called the Creator of heaven and earth; for we are his peculiar work, "his workmanship, (τὸ ποίημα,) created anew by his Spirit," as Paul speaks, and as we have formerly explained on other passages.[1] This work is, therefore, more excellent than the whole creation of the world; that no one may ascribe it to his own exertions or power that he has been adopted into the Church of God; for it is not without good reason that we are called "his workmanship."

It may be asked, "Why does the Lord say that he *formed Jerusalem from ancient days?* for there were other cities far more ancient." I reply, this must not be viewed as referring to the outward form or structure of the city, but to that eternal decree by which he chose it to be his dwelling-place; for although it was declared, even when the ark was built, "This is my rest, here will I dwell," (Psalm cxxxii. 14;) and again by Moses, "Wherever I shall record my name, I will come to thee and will bless thee," (Exod. xx. 24;) yet it had been ordained by God long before. "We were chosen," as Paul also informs us, "before the foundations of the world were laid," (Eph. i. 4;) and James declares that "we were begotten by the word of truth, that we might be as it were the first-fruits of all the creatures." (James i. 18.) He will, therefore, preserve us above all creatures, and will never allow us to perish; and indeed, for the same reason that Christ is called "the first-born of every creature," (Col. i. 15,) "the Church, which is his body," (Eph. i. 22, 23,) possesses the highest honour and dignity in the whole world. I leave to the Rabbins their dreams, that God created the Messiah and Jerusalem with a throne of glory before he created heaven and earth. But we must maintain this doctrine, that God will be the faithful guardian of his Church, because he has deigned to prefer her to the whole world.

And should I now bring it to be desolation? Others take these words in a different sense. I acknowledge that the

[1] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. ii. pp. 26 and 83.

Prophet's words are in the past tense, *Now have I brought and placed it;* but as the change of tenses is frequent in the Hebrew language, the Prophet, after having said that God is the founder of his Church, and that it is the most illustrious of all his works, undoubtedly argues from it that it is impossible that he shall involve his Church in the same ruin as ordinary things. We must therefore read it as a question, "Shall I now bring it?" or, "Shall I now have brought it?" As if he had said, "Should I allow it to be ruined, like other cities that have been destroyed and razed?"[1] For he compares Jerusalem to other cities which had been overthrown by the king of Assyria, and subjected to his power, that no one may think that the tyrant can so easily overturn it; because it holds a different position from other cities which have been destroyed and levelled with the ground. It ought not therefore to be compared even to the best fortified cities, for they quickly fall with their earthly strength; but the Church, though small and feeble, has a firm and solid foundation in the election of God, and cannot be overturned by any billows or tempests.

We see wonderful changes that have often taken place throughout the whole world, republics subverted, empires overthrown, very powerful nations subdued, their name extinguished, and their glory effaced. Where is now the majesty of the Roman Empire? Where is the grandeur of that nation which was mistress of the whole world? If there are any remains of it, (and they are few,) do they not aid the wretched bondage of that detestable monster, Antichrist, whose tyranny is exercised over the whole world? Where is now the liberty of Rome? Where is the beauty of that illustrious republic? May not Rome be justly called the workshop of iniquity, and the lodging-house of every crime?

But amidst those frightful changes, the Lord declares that he will assist Jerusalem, that is, his Church, and that although amidst those changes she may be afflicted and tossed in

[1] The marginal reading of the English version runs thus, "Hast thou not heard how I have made it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? Should I now bring it to be laid waste, and defenced cities to be ruinous heaps?" The coincidence with the version given by CALVIN is striking. Was it accidental?—*Ed.*

various ways, yet she shall stand erect, or at least the shaking and oppression which she may suffer shall not hinder her from being renewed and multiplied from age to age by various resurrections. Although there are not always in the world the same members of the Church, yet it is the same body joined to the same head, that is, Christ. The Lord will therefore defend his city, and will cause "the children of his servants to continue, that their seed may be established for ever." (Ps. cii. 28.)

27. *For their inhabitants were maimed.*[1] Here the Prophet expresses more fully what he had formerly glanced at briefly, that we ought not to judge of the condition of the Church from the stability of this world; for although fortified cities are taken, and the strongest men lose courage and fall into the hands of their enemies, yet the Church shall stand and flourish, because it does not rest on its own strength, and has its foundation not on the earth but in heaven. There is thus an implied contrast between fortified cities, which alarmed and terror-struck inhabitants are unable to defend, and the Church of God, which rests on his grace alone, and therefore resists every attack, so that it never fails; for the Church refers everything to God alone, from whom she receives the commencement of life, uninterrupted strength, perseverance, every part of salvation, and every blessing.

Hence we learn that all fortresses are of no avail, if the hand of the Lord do not assist. All human strength will be broken and decay, if it be not supported by his power; castles, bulwarks, and the most powerful armies will be of no use without him. This is expressed more fully by the following metaphors,—

Like the grass of the field and the green herb. It is of importance that believers should be led to admire the wonderful grace which God exercises towards them, that they may

[1] "Their inhabitants were of small power. Heb., short of hand."—(Eng. Ver.) "Their inhabitants are short of hand, that is, I have made them weak, they are *ashamed and confounded.* By these and the following expressions he shews how easily the nations were vanquished by the king of Assyria, when it had been so determined by Jehovah."—*Rosenmüller.*

not envy the earthly wealth possessed by irreligious men. Although their power be dazzling and magnificent, yet he shews that they are like "the green herb and the grass," which indeed flourish for a time, but quickly wither. He dwarfs them still more by another metaphor which he adds,

The grass of the house-tops. It is indeed lofty and seen by all, but the more elevated its position, it is the nearer to the heat, and withers more quickly, and is of no use whatever; and it is said also in the psalm, that "they who pass by do not bless it." (Ps. cxxix. 8.) Though the enemies of the Church[1] are high, and as it were exalted to heaven, though they flourish and have abundant wealth, yet they quickly fall. In like manner, therefore, as the corn which lies on the ground at our feet is more valuable than the unfruitful herb that grows on the house-tops; so the Lord shews that the low condition of his servants is far more desirable than that of those who, leaning on their own strength, vaunt themselves above others, and boast against God himself.[2]

Which withereth before it is ripe. Some think that this is a fourth comparison, but I think that the Prophet added it for the sake of exposition; as if he had said, that grass of this kind withers before it come into the stalk, that is, before it is fully ripe; in the same manner as it is said in the psalm, "Before it is grown up, it withereth." (Ps. cxxix. 6.)

28. *I know thy sitting down and thy rising up.* He returns to the insufferable pride of that tyrant, who claimed everything for himself, as if he had not been subject to any one, and dared to despise God as compared to himself, and to load him with reproaches. He rebukes that man's pride and insolence, "But I know thy sitting down." This being the cause of the fierceness of wicked men, that they think that no one is above them, and that they are not even subject to the providence of God, he shews that they can absolutely do nothing except so far as he permits them. By *sitting down*

[1] Les ennemis de l'Eglise.

[2] "On the flat roofs of the east, if they be not carefully kept clean, herbage grows from seeds, which perhaps had been left there while they were in process of being dried, or had been brought thither by the wind. But in consequence of the want of soil it quickly withered."—*Rosenmüller.*

and rising up, are here denoted deliberations, plans, and schemes. Wicked and irreligious men enter into various deliberations how they may be able to oppress and destroy the people of God; but to whatever hand they turn, and which way soever they pursue, they will accomplish nothing without the will of God. The providence of God restrains them, and drives them hither and thither, so that frequently, contrary to their intention, they are conducted to a very good end, as God thinks fit, to whom it peculiarly belongs to "direct the steps of men." (Prov. xvi. 9.)

And thy indignation against me. He warns Sennacherib that he is well aware of his rage, and declares that, while wicked men storm on the earth, he preserves calm silence, and laughs at their madness; and because Sennacherib was furious, and thought that he would not be punished for it, the Prophet expressly adds this, that believers may not think that this is new or unknown to God, or that he pays no attention to them.

29. *Because thou wast angry against me.* The more furiously wicked men rise up against God, and the more outrageous the violence by which they are actuated, so much the more is he wont eventually to set himself in opposition to them. For a time, indeed, he permits them to domineer and to have everything that they wish, but after long forbearance he restrains them, and, as it were, puts a bridle on their neck, that they may not imagine that they have everything in their power. Sennacherib was a remarkable instance of this, for in his rage against God, the more insolently he vaunted, the heavier did he find the wrath of God to be against him; which all wicked men ought also to expect.

Therefore will I put my hook (or, *my ring*) *in thy nose.* This is pleasant mockery of stupidity and wantonness; as if he had said, "I see how it is, by treating thee mildly and gently, I would gain nothing; for thy rage is insatiable. But since thou canst not be tamed, I will curb thee like a savage beast." And in this manner he declares more plainly, that God not only sees and knows what is proposed or contrived by wicked men, but also subdues and restrains their fierceness in such a manner, that he drags them reluctantly where-

ever he pleases, as one would lead a wild beast held by a bridle or a ring. חח (*chāch*)[1] is translated by some a *hook*, but I have preferred to translate it a *ring;* because a *hook* is used for catching fishes, and would not so well apply to a beast.

Sennacherib was compelled to *return by the way by which he came,* because, while he was revolving the project of subduing every part of Judea and Egypt, he hastily, without having accomplished anything, took the speediest method of returning, which he would not have done of his own accord, if God had not drawn him back by unseen methods.

30. *And this shall be a sign to thee.* He now directs his discourse to Hezekiah and the whole nation; for he did not address Sennacherib as if he expected him to listen, but in order that, by contemptuously mocking at the absent tyrant, he might more powerfully stimulate the minds of believers to stronger confidence. If he had simply said, "Take courage, Hezekiah; though Sennacherib is insolent, yet in due time I will restrain him;" that discourse would have been less impressive, than when he addresses the tyrant, and, by thundering against him, encourages believers to despise his presumption.[2] Accordingly, the speech directed to the tyrant is now followed by a seasonable address to Hezekiah and the nation, and a promise of deliverance to them; not only that he will rescue them from the jaws of a savage beast, but also that Hezekiah shall enjoy a peaceful reign, and that the rest of the people shall have everything necessary for leading a prosperous and happy life. Thus he enlarges on the benefit derived from the deliverance in such a manner as to shew that he intends, not in one way only, but in a variety of ways, to promote the interests of his people; for not only does he once and instantaneously rescue them from dangers, but largely and bountifully bestows his kindness upon them, so that the fruit is seen long afterwards.

[1] "חח (*chāch*) denotes a *ring* inserted in the nose pierced for that purpose, by means of which the Arabs and neighbouring nations are wont to tame and guide buffaloes and camels, and which is so much the more powerful instrument in curbing the camel, that by drawing a rein which hangs from it on both sides, the obstinate and refractory animal is prevented from breathing."—*Rosenmüller.*

[2] "A ne tenir conte des menaces d'iceluy." "To pay no attention to his threatenings."

But there is an apparent impropriety in putting as "a sign" an event which occurred later than the deliverance itself; for if he intended to encourage the besieged to entertain favourable hopes, he ought to have made some exhibition beforehand, instead of relating what he would do afterwards.[1] I reply, there are two kinds of signs. Some go before the event, and lead us to it as by the hand; while others follow for the purpose of confirming the event, that it may be more strongly impressed upon our minds, and may never be effaced from our remembrance. For instance, when the Lord brought back his people out of Egypt, he gave many signs to Moses beforehand; but he also appointed another that should be after the deliverance, "You shall sacrifice to me three days afterwards." (Exod. iii. 12, 18.) The design was, that they should not forget so great a blessing, but should give thanks to God after having received this additional favour. It is a sign of this nature which Isaiah here describes; and certainly it tends greatly to confirm our faith, to place before our eyes the uninterrupted course of God's favours towards us, that we may consider how various they are.

When the enemy had been repelled, there was danger from famine, which most commonly comes after war; for the wasting and pillaging of the fields must have been followed by great scarcity of provisions. Amidst so great scarcity as seemed likely to ensue, the Lord promises that there will be no lack of food, and holds out this as a very evident sign of deliverance, in order to convince them the more that he will be the author of the deliverance, or, at least, to fix it more deeply on their hearts. This was indeed incredible, and exceeded all expectation and belief; but it was necessary that the faith of Hezekiah and of the people should be excited in such a manner that, after having heard of so great kindness, they might be more ready to hope well, and next, that the event might shew that those illustrious works of God could not be ascribed to chance.

The meaning therefore is, "After having driven out the

[1] "Il devoit (ce semble) monstrer la vertu de bonne heure, et non pas declarer ce qu'il feroit apres le siege levé." "He ought (one would think) to have shewn his power at an early period, and not to have declared what he would do after the siege had been raised."

enemy, God will restrain him so that he cannot bring fresh troops, and thou shalt peacefully possess thy country ; he will also supply thee with food and nourishment, so that thou shalt be in want of nothing." But because, as usually happens, they had consumed a large portion of the crop, and destroyed a part of it, and because they who were besieged or fugitives had it not in their power to attend to agricultural labours, he promises that they shall have food without sowing till they sow on the third year.

31. *And that which shall be preserved of the house of Judah.* He follows out the former statement; for he declares that the Lord will deliver Jerusalem so as not to cast away his care of her afterwards, but will be her saviour to the end. And indeed all the blessings that the Lord bestows upon us are a sign and testimony of continued kindness towards us, that we may know that we shall never be forsaken by him. But here we ought chiefly to remember what we formerly remarked, that the defence of Jerusalem belonged to God, because he had chosen it to be his sanctuary, and because the Messiah would proceed from it.

And that which shall be left. פְּלֵיטָה (*pĕlētāh*) literally signifies *deliverance ;* but here it is a collective noun for "men delivered," in the same manner as in other passages, "captivity" is put for "captives." (Psalm xiv. 7, and liii. 6; Jer. xxix. 14.) And it is not without reason that he promises increase to a small remnant; for although the siege had been raised, still the people, being greatly diminished, had slight cause of joy, and full restoration could scarcely be expected by so small a number of persons. For the purpose of soothing this grief, therefore, he declares that the land will be full of inhabitants, as if a very abundant harvest would fill the granaries which had formerly been empty.

Nor was it merely the desolation of the land of Judah that might have discouraged the hearts of believers or pierced them with sorrow, but likewise that greater diminution which arose from the ten tribes being led into captivity. (2 Kings xv. 29, and xvii. 6.) Although they have been thus cut down, Isaiah declares that the Lord will cause them to recover their former condition, and a vast multitude

to spring up; for the Lord permits his people to be thus diminished and brought very low, that his glory may afterwards be illustriously displayed in their deliverance. What he accomplished at that time ought also to be expected in the present day; so that in proportion as we see the strength of the Church weakened and brought low, we may be more fully convinced that God has in his power the means of multiplying a small number; for this restoration must not be measured by our powers of judging.

Shall strike root downward. He declares that there will be so great desolation that it shall seem as if the Church had been uprooted, and had utterly perished; and indeed the destruction of the kingdom of Israel was a very sad spectacle of cutting off. But the Prophet says, that there shall be such an increase that the tree which had been nearly torn up shall "strike its roots" deep; for although the Church does not make professions of towering greatness, as is commonly done by the rulers of this world, yet the Lord imparts a secret vigour which causes it to spring up and grow beyond human expectation. Let us not be terrified, therefore, when no roots are seen, or when we think that they are dead; for he hath promised that he will cause it to "strike root downwards."

And bear fruit upwards. This is added, because the Church does not only flourish like grass, (which was formerly said of the condition of the wicked,[1]) but brings forth abundant fruit; and thus the Lord completes in her what he hath once begun.

32. *For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant.* Formerly by the metaphor of a root and of fruits he foretold the deliverance of the Church; he now declares the same thing without a figure. He alludes to the siege by which a small number of people, who had been left in the city, were shut up as in a prison and reduced to very great straits; he says that they shall now go out, and that the whole country shall be open to them, and that they shall be at liberty to move wherever they please without fear. The *going forth* is thus contrasted with the narrow limits within which the trem-

[1] See p. 135.

bling Jews had been forced by the dread of enemies to confine themselves. Yet by this word he expresses not only liberty to go out, but the increase of the nation, which had been reduced to a small number. When not only was Judea again covered by a multitude of men, but from the remnant there sprung vast multitudes who were spread over the various countries of the world, this could not have been done, unless out of that small number the Lord had created not merely a single nation, but many nations.

The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will do this. Not only does he contrast "the zeal of God" with the purposes of men, in order to extol the excellence of the work, but he states that it is sufficient for every purpose, that God may give an astonishing demonstration of his power. At first sight, as we have said, the thing was incredible; there were obstacles on every side, and no means of relief; and therefore he declares that God regards his Church with such fervent love, that he does not hesitate to work in an extraordinary manner for promoting her salvation. The same mode of expression was employed by him on a similar occasion. (Isaiah ix. 7.)

33. *Therefore thus saith Jehovah.* He now returns to the deliverance of which he had formerly spoken; for God promised, first, that he would drive out Sennacherib; secondly, that he would grant food and nourishment for the sustenance of the people, though the country had been wasted and pillaged; and, thirdly, that he would cause that small number to grow into a vast multitude. Having made these declarations, he returns to the first, because without it all the rest might appear to be useless; that is, if the people were not rescued from the hands of that tyrant.

He shall not enter into the city. God threatens that he will be as a fortress, to hinder him from "entering into the city," and that he will even meet him, so as to hinder him from coming nearer or fighting against it; for he says that he shall not *cast an arrow* nor *a balister.* I think that in this passage סללה (*sōlĕlāh*) denotes a balister, or some such machine for throwing darts, rather than a *mound;* for "mounds" are not thrown or poured.

34. *By the way that he came shall he return.* We have

formerly explained what it is to return by the same way, that is, to depart without having accomplished anything, as we commonly say, (*Il s'en est retourné comme il est venu,*) "he returned as he came," when nothing has been accomplished, and the efforts are unsuccessful. To confirm this, he adds, that "thus hath the Lord spoken;" for as soon as he "who cannot lie" (Tit. i. 2) hath spoken, we ought to embrace and kiss his word, as if the result were rendered certain by the removal of every obstruction.

35. *And I will be a protector.* This is the reason of the preceding statement, why Sennacherib should not enter into the city; because the Lord will protect it. The Prophet therefore bids Hezekiah and the whole nation turn their eyes towards God, because the sight of that tyrant was so alarming that they might tremble at it. In like manner, if we now contemplate the power of our enemies, we shall be overpowered by fear, and there will scarcely be any room for hope; but we ought to look directly to God, and embrace his promises, by which we are defended as by a shield; and since God is sufficiently powerful to restrain a mortal man, to him ought we to turn our eyes; for this promise must not be limited to that time, but ought to be extended to all times. Yet the expression used by the Prophet is more extensive, and conveys fuller meaning; for God affirms that he will be the guardian and protector of the city; that is, because he had pledged himself to defend it. Hence he infers that it will be preserved, because God's protection renders its preservation certain.

For my own sake. When he says that he will do this "for his own sake," he calls on Hezekiah and all believers to remember his gracious covenant. For the Jews, though often and severely chastised, had obstinately provoked the wrath of God against them, and therefore deserved not only that he should deprive them of all assistance, but that he should execute against them the highest examples of dreadful vengeance. In order therefore to prevent them from despairing, he shews that God will be their defender, not because he finds any cause in them, but rather because he looks to himself; first, that he may adhere firmly to his purpose,

not to cast away the posterity of Abraham which he adopted, not to abolish religious worship, not to blot out the remembrance of his name on the earth by destroying his sanctuary; and, secondly, not to expose his name to the jeers and blasphemies of the nations. And these words contain an implied reproof which that nation ought to have felt to be severe, and justly; because the good king had more difficulty in pacifying them than in repelling the enemy; for they distrusted, and stormed, and thought that no hope of safety was left for them. The Lord, therefore, did not look at the merits of the people or of any other person, but only had regard to his own glory; for the contrast which is expressed by Ezekiel must here be understood, "Not for your sakes, O house of Israel, will I do this, but for my own sake."[1] (Ezek. xxxvi. 22.) Now, since we have the same argument to plead in the present day, let us not hesitate to make use of this shield against our sins, "Though we most highly deserve a thousand deaths, yet it is enough for God to look to his goodness and faithfulness, that he may fulfil what he hath promised." Though it is of no advantage to hypocrites that God is the continual protector of his Church, yet the elect will always have this as a very safe refuge, that although they bring nothing of their own to appease the wrath of God, yet since God, moved by nothing else than his infinite goodness, built his Church and determined to defend it, he will never suffer it to perish.

And for my servant David's sake. This is highly worthy of observation; for although God needed not to seek in any one but in himself the reason why he embraced that nation with a gracious regard, yet it is not without good reason that he brings forward, as a very sure pledge of his love, *David*, by whose hand he had made a covenant, and to whom he had promised to be a Father. (2 Sam. vii. 12.) The Prophet does not speak of David as a private individual, but as a holy king whose throne was established by the hand of God, under whose guidance the Church would continue to be safe, and, in short, who would be the mediator between God and the Church; for in this capacity he surpassed even

[1] "Pour l'amour de mon sainct nom." "For the love of my holy name."

the angels themselves, so far as he represented the person of Christ. His throne was, indeed, soon afterwards cast down, and his crown torn in pieces, yet this was no unmeaning confirmation, that God intended to protect the city for a time, because he determined not to make void what he had testified to David concerning the eternity of his kingdom. And we know that the captivity of the people did not wholly set aside the kingly power in the posterity of David till at length Christ came, who on this account is called *David* in other passages. (Jer. xxx. 9 ; Ezek. xxxvii. 24 ; Hos. iii. 5.)

This shews the great absurdity of the Papists in alleging that it is through the merits of the saints that God pardons us ; for here the case of David is widely different from that of other saints, on account of the promise which had been made to him. He might have named Abraham, or any other person, who possessed no small authority in the Church ; but since he was now speaking of the preservation of the Church, and of the eternity of the kingdom of Christ, he named in a peculiar manner him who expressly, along with others, received that promise, " This is my rest, here will I dwell." (Psalm cxxxii. 14.) Since therefore this passage has regard to the promise, and not to the person, the Papists are doubly foolish in thinking that it affords support to the intercession of the saints, which is of their own contrivance. On the contrary, what they plead in their own behalf absolutely contradicts their error ; because David is here represented as the type of the only Mediator, who sets aside the intercessions which they have invented.

36. *And the angel of Jehovah went out.* The Prophet now relates what happened to the Assyrian, that we may not think that the Lord spoke in vain. He shews, therefore, that his prediction was proved by the event, that it might clearly appear that God had sent him, and that he had not uttered anything rashly. Yet we ought not to limit so remarkable a work of God to a single prediction ; but the authority of the Prophet was sustained, and his calling sanctioned, as to the whole course of his doctrine. He has related a singular and well-known event which had recently

happened, in order to prove, by means of it, to the end of the world, that God had spoken by his mouth.

Where that slaughter was carried into effect by the angel is not very evident. The opinion generally entertained is, that it happened at the siege of Jerusalem; but it is also possible that it may have happened during the march of Sennacherib's army; that is, while he was coming to besiege the city. I leave that matter uncertain, because it is of little importance. From the context, certainly, we may clearly learn that the tyrant did not approach so near as to be able to throw a dart into the city.

We must indeed reject that invention by which Satan, through profane historians, has attempted to obscure this extraordinary judgment of God, that, in consequence of a part of the army having been destroyed by a plague during the war in Egypt, Sennacherib returned into his own dominions. So great a number of persons dying in one night cannot be attributed to a plague; and the father of lies, with his wonted cunning, has turned aside into Egypt the blessing which God bestowed on his Church. The event itself cries aloud that Jerusalem was miraculously rescued, as it were, out of the midst of destruction; especially since Isaiah had already delivered that message by which God testified, in a manner which could not be mistaken, that God would bestow this deliverance on the Jews and not on the Egyptians.

And slew in the camp of the Assyrians. That no one may ascribe the miracle to natural causes, it is expressly added, that so great a multitude was slain by the hand of *the angel.* Nor is it a new thing for the Lord to make use of the ministrations of angels to promote the safety of believers, for whose advantage he appointed all the armies of heaven; and it tends greatly to confirm our faith when we learn that an infinite number of guardians keep watch over us. (Psalm xci. 11.) The Lord alone, indeed, is of himself able, and undoubtedly he alone preserves us; for the angels may be regarded as his hand, and on that account they are called "principalities and powers." (Rom. viii. 38; Eph. i. 21.) But it contributes much to aid our weakness that he hath appointed heavenly messengers to be our defenders and

guardians. Yet all the praise is due to God alone, of whom the angels are only instruments; and therefore we must beware of falling into the superstition of the Papists, who, by their absurd worship of angels, ascribe to them that power which belongs to God; an error with which we know that some very learned men in all ages have been chargeable. Whether it was done by the hand of one angel or of many angels, we cannot absolutely ascertain, nor is it a matter of great importance; for the Lord can do it as easily by one angel as by a thousand, and does not make use of their agency as if he needed the assistance of others, but rather, as we have formerly said, in order to support our weakness. Yet it is more probable, and agrees better with the words of the Prophet, that a single angel was commissioned to execute this judgment, as in the ancient redemption an angel passed through the whole of Egypt to slay the first-born. (Exod. xii. 29.) Although God sometimes executes his vengeance by means of evil angels, yet he chose one of his willing servants, that by means of him he might provide for the safety of the Church.

A hundred and eighty-five thousand. That the army was so vast need not make us wonder, as ignorant people do, who reckon it to be incredible and fabulous when they are told that so great a multitude went into the field of battle, because we are accustomed to carry on war with much smaller troops. But that the case was very different with eastern nations, is fully testified by historians and by well-known transactions of the present day. Nor ought we to be astonished at the vast forces which they led into battle, for they are much more capable of enduring heat, and toil, and hunger, and are satisfied with a much smaller portion of food, and do not care about those luxuries by which our soldiers in the present day are corrupted.

As to the way and manner of the slaughter, this passage gives no definite statement. The Jews conjecture that the soldiers were struck by thunder, but they do so without any authority or probable evidence; for, being bold in contriving fables, they unwarrantably affirm as certain whatever comes into their mind, as if it were supported by some history.

Behold, they were all dead corpses. That the slaughter was not done so openly as the Jews allege is very evident from this narrative, which states that they were lying dead. Now, if they had been struck by a thunderbolt, every person must have known it, and it would not have been omitted by the Prophet. This might serve to refute the conjecture of the Jews, but I choose rather to leave the matter doubtful. It is enough that the Lord, having determined to save Jerusalem from the hand of the Assyrian, cut off his army by a sudden death, without any agency of man.

37. *Then Sennacherib, king of Assyria, went away and returned.* He now shews how disgraceful was the retreat of this haughty tyrant, who in the wishes of his heart had already devoured the whole of Judea, and formerly dared to pretend to be more powerful than God himself. By employing a variety of words to express his departure, the Prophet indirectly censures the shameful flight; for the repetition is not superfluous, "He set out, he went away, he returned." The title of *king* is added for the sake of greater disgrace. "Lo, this is the great king of whose power Rabshakeh boasted so highly."

And dwelt in Nineveh. He did not come into Judea, that he might depart from it in that disgraceful manner; and therefore the hand of God throws him back, even as straw is driven by the wind. The circumstance of his dwelling in Nineveh reminds us also that he had lost his courage as well as his forces; for he would not willingly have remained at rest, if despair had not held him like a chain. This means, therefore, that he was satisfied with his ancient domains, of which Nineveh was the chief city and royal residence. At a later period, when the Assyrians were conquered by the Chaldeans, the seat of government was removed to Babylon, that is, ten years after the death of Sennacherib, and during the reign of Esarhaddon, his successor, who is here mentioned, for since parricides did not want defenders, a nation torn by factions was easily subdued and conquered by foreign enemies. Availing himself of this opportunity, Merodach invaded the Assyrians, and subjected them to his power.

38. *While he was worshipping.* Here the Jews allow them-

selves that liberty of conjecture in which they are always accustomed to indulge. They contrive a story, that Sennacherib consulted an oracle, and asked why he could not conquer the Jews; that the answer was, that Abraham wished to sacrifice his son to God; that the tyrant, following that example, then determined to slay his son, in order to appease his god; and that his sons, enraged at the cruel design of their father, slew him in the temple of his idol. But it is unnecessary to spend time in such conjectures, in which the Jews display excessive impudence.

Here it is highly important to behold, as in a picture, the unhappy death of tyrants, whom the Lord destroys without the agency of men, when everything appears about to be overthrown by their violence, and whom he exposes with all their power to universal scorn. Sennacherib, who had come into Judea with a vast army, returns home with few soldiers, and is led in triumph, as it were, by God as a conqueror. But the matter does not end here; for in the very heart of his empire, in the metropolis, in the temple itself, the reverence for which defended the meanest persons from the mob, he is slain, not by a foreign enemy, not by a people in a state of sedition, not by traitors, and in a word, not by servants, but by his own sons, that the murder may be more disgraceful. It ought to be observed, that those insatiable gluttons, who freely wallow in the blood of others, are slain by their own followers, and are punished by those from whom above all others they ought to have been safe. This is more shocking than if they had been put to death by strangers; but God thus punishes the cruelty of those who, in their eagerness to enjoy power, did not even spare the innocent. Even in profane historians we find various examples of this kind, in which we may easily behold the judgments of the Lord.

Besides, the insatiable ambition of Sennacherib receives its just reward, because, while he is intent on the wide extension of his territories, he cannot secure the peace of his own family, by leading his children to live at peace; for out of his neglect of some, and undue attachment to others, the conspiracy arose. And not only was this tyrant slain, but his kingdom also was soon afterwards overthrown, as we

have already said ; and, in the meantime, that his successor might not dare to make any attempt against the Jews, God kept him also within the country by internal broils.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

1. In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

2. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord,

3. And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept sore.

4. Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying,

5. Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

6. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

7. And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken;

8. Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

9. The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

10. I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

1. In diebus illis ægrotavit Ezechias usque ad mortem. Et venit ad eum Isaias filius Amoz Propheta, dixitque illi: Sic dicit Iehova, Præcipe quoad domum tuam ; (*vel, domui tuæ ;*) quia tu morieris, et non vives.

2. Tunc vertit Ezechias faciem suam ad parietem, oravitque Iehovam.

3. Ac dixit: Obsecro, Iehova, recordare nunc quod ambulaverim coram te in veritate, in corde perfecto, et recte fecerim in oculis tuis. Flevitque Ezechias fletu magno.

4. Tunc factum fuit verbum Iehovæ ad Isaiam, dicendo:

5. Vade, et dic Ezechiæ: Sic dicit Iehova Deus David patris tui: Audivi orationem tuam, et vidi lachrymas tuas: Ecce ego adjicio ad dies tuos annos quindecim.

6. Et eruam te de manu regis Assur, atque urbem hanc; et protector ero huic urbi.

7. Erit autem hoc tibi signum ab Iehova, quod Iehova hanc rem facturus sit, de qua loquutus est:

8. Ecce ego reduco umbram graduum, quibus descendit in horologio Achaz per solem decem gradibus; et reversus est sol decem gradibus in horologio, quibus jam descenderat.

9. Scriptum Ezechiæ regis Iuda, cum ægrotasset, ac convaluisset a morbo suo.

10. Ego dixi in successione dierum meorum, vadam ad portas sepulchri; privatus sum residuo annorum meorum.

11. I said, I shall not see the Lord, *even* the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

12. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life; he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.

13. I reckoned till morning, *that* as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.

14. Like a crane, *or* a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail *with looking* upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

15. What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done *it:* I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

16. O Lord, by these *things men* live, and in all these *things is* the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.

17. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

18. For the grave cannot praise thee; death can *not* celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

19. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I *do* this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

20. The Lord *was ready* to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.

21. For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay *it* for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover.

22. Hezekiah also had said, What *is* the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?

11. Dixi, Non videbo Deum, Deum in terra viventium; non aspiciam hominem ultra cum incolis seculi.

12. Habitatio mea discessit, et convoluta est a me, quasi tabernaculum pastoris; succidi quasi textor vitam meam; ab elevatione (*vel macie aut morbo*) succidet me; a die usque ad noctem conficies me.

13. Supputabam ad auroram; sicut leo, ita contrivit ossa mea; ab aurora ad noctem conficies me.

14. Sicut grus aut hirundo garriebam, gemebam quasi columba. Elevabantur oculi mei in sublime, Domine, vim fecit mihi, recrea me.

15. Quid loquar? Qui dixit mihi, ipse fecit: Movebor (*vel, trepidus incedam*) omnibus diebus vitæ meæ in amaritudine animæ meæ.

16. Domine, etiam omnibus qui ultra eos vivent, vita spiritus mei in illis (nota erit,) et me quod dormire feceris, et vivificaveris me.

17. Ecce in pace amaritudo mihi amara, et tibi placuit animam meam (eruere) a fovea; (*vel, amasti animam meam a fovea interitus;*) quia projecisti post tergum omnia peccata mea.

18. Quoniam non infernus confitebitur tibi neque mors laudabit te; nec expectabunt qui in foveam descendunt veritatem tuam.

19. Vivens, vivens, ipse confitebitur tibi; sicut ego hodie. Pater filiis notam faciet veritatem tuam.

20. Iehova ad me servandum; et cantica nostra cantabimus omnibus diebus vitæ nostræ in domo Iehovæ.

21. Dixit autem Isaias, Accipient massam ficuum, et adhibebunt ulceri, et vivet.

22. Dixerat enim (*vel, autem*) Ezechias, Quod signum, quòd ascensurus sim in domum Iehovæ?

1. *In those days.* The Prophet now relates that the pious king was violently assailed by a different kind of temptation, namely, that he was seized with a mortal disease and despaired of life; and not only so, but likewise that he suffered dreadful agony, in consequence of having received from God a warning of his death, as if in a hostile manner God had thundered on his head from heaven. At what time that happened, whether after the siege, or during the siege, is not very evident; but it is unnecessary to give ourselves much trouble on that subject. It may be easily inferred from the sacred history, that this event happened about the fourteenth year of his reign, either while he was invaded by the Assyrian, or after he was delivered, for he reigned twenty-nine years, (2 Kings xviii. 2;) in the fourteenth year of his reign the Assyrian attacked Judea, (2 Kings xviii. 13,) and fifteen years were added by the promise which is here related by the Prophet, (2 Kings xx. 6,) and this makes up twenty-nine years. Hence it appears that it must have been about the fourteenth year of his reign that Hezekiah was afflicted by this disease.

The only doubtful point is, whether it was during the time of the siege, or afterwards, that *he was sick.* For my own part, I look upon it as a more probable conjecture, that he was attacked by this disease after the siege had been raised; for if he had been sick during the time of the siege, that circumstance would not have been left out by the Prophet, who, on the other hand, has related that Hezekiah sent messengers, went into the temple, spread a letter before the Lord, and sent for the Prophet. These circumstances do not at all apply to a man who was suffering heavy sickness; and if disease had been added to so many distresses, that circumstance would not have been omitted. In doubtful matters, therefore, let us follow what is more probable, namely, that the pious king, having been delivered from the enemy, is attacked by disease and is in great danger.

Yet it is not without reason that our attention is also directed to an almost uninterrupted succession of events, that we may know that he scarcely had leisure to breathe, but, after having scarcely reached the shore from one ship-

wreck, suddenly fell into another equally dangerous. Let us therefore remember that believers must endure various temptations, so that they are assailed sometimes by wars, sometimes by diseases, sometimes by other calamities, and sometimes one calamity follows another in unbroken succession, and they are laid under the necessity of maintaining uninterrupted warfare during their whole life; so that, when they have escaped from one danger, they are on the eve of enduring another. They ought to be prepared in such a manner, that when the Lord shall be pleased to add sorrow to sorrow, they may bear it patiently, and may not be discouraged by any calamity. If any respite be allowed,[1] let them know that this is granted for their weakness, but let not a short truce lead them to form a false imagination of a lengthened peace; let them make additional exertions, till, having finished the course of their earthly life, they arrive at the peaceful harbour.

Even unto death. The severity of the disease might be very distressing to the good man. First, mortal disease brings along with it sharp pains, especially when it is attended by an inflammatory boil. But the most distressing of all was, that he might think that God opposed and hated him, because, as soon as he had been rescued from so great a calamity, he was immediately dragged to death, as if he had been unworthy of reigning. Besides, at that time he had no children; and there was reason to believe that his death would be followed by a great disorder of public affairs. (2 Kings xxi. 1.) This dread of the wrath of God occasions far more bitter anguish to the consciences of believers than any bodily disease; and if they lose their perception of the favour of God, it is impossible that they should not be immediately grieved. But God, as if he expressly intended to add oil to the flame, absolutely threatens death, and, in order to affect him more deeply, takes away all hope of life.

For thou shalt die, and shalt not live. The clause, *thou shalt not live*, is not superfluous, but is added for the purpose of giving intensity or confirmation, as if it had been

[1] "S'ils ont quelque loisir de reprendre haleine." "If they have any leisure to draw breath."

said that there will be no hope of remedy. Men practise evasion, even though death is at hand, and eagerly seek the means of escape; and, therefore, that Hezekiah may not look around him as if he were uncertain, he is twice informed that he must die.

Give charge concerning thy house,[1] or, *to thy house.*[2] In order that he may bid adieu to the world, the Prophet enjoins him speedily to order what he wishes to be done after his death; as if he had said, "If thou dost not wish that death shall seize thee, give immediate orders about thy domestic affairs." Here we see in passing, that the Lord approves of a practice which has been always customary among men, namely, that when they are about to die, they give orders to their neighbours or servants, and arrange the affairs of their family.

Jonathan renders it, "Give up thy house to another;" but the construction conveys a different meaning. Every person, when he must depart from this life, ought to testify that he pays regard to his duty, and that he provides even for the future interests of his family. But his chief care ought to be, not about testaments and heirs, but about promoting the salvation of those whom the Lord has committed to his charge.

2. *Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall.* He now relates the manner in which Hezekiah was affected when he received this message, that we may see his piety and faith. He does not break out into rage or indignation like unbelievers, but bears this affliction patiently. He does not debate with God, as if he had already endured enough of distresses from enemies, and ought not to be again chastised so severely by a new kind of afflictions. And this is true patience, not merely in a single instance to endure patiently any distress, but to persevere to the end, and always to be prepared for enduring new troubles, but, above all, to bow to the judgments of God in calm silence, and not to murmur at his severity, though it appear to be great; as David acknow-

[1] "Set thine house in order. Heb., Give charge concerning thy house." —Eng. Ver.

[2] Quoad domum tuam, vel, domui tuæ.

ledges that "he was dumb, because he saw that he had to deal with God." (Psalm xxxix. 9.)

And such is the import of "turning the face *to the wall;*" for, in consequence of being overwhelmed by shame and grief, as if he shunned the face of men, he summons up his energy, and turns wholly to God, so as to rely entirely upon him. The mere attitude, indeed, is immaterial; but it is of very great importance to us, that nothing should be presented to our eyes or senses which would drag us away from prayer, that we may pour out our desires more freely before God. We are naturally unsteady, and easily drawn aside; and therefore we cannot be too diligent in fixing our attention. If we must pray in public, we are restrained by shame, lest, if we manifest excessive vehemence, we should be thought to do so for the sake of ostentation; or we are afraid of falling into improper attitudes; and therefore we ought to remove everything that would lead us aside.

Hezekiah, therefore, does not turn away his face, as if he were overwhelmed, or as if he bitterly and obstinately rejected the message that had been brought to him, but in this manner sharpens his eagerness for prayer. That he does not present his prayers openly, as when he formerly went up into the temple, followed by the rest of the multitude, (Isaiah xxxvii. 14,) is an indication of the deepest anxiety, as if grief had seized his whole frame. Yet it is a remarkable pattern of piety, that, when he has received the sentence of death, he does not cease to call upon God.

These words, *Thou shalt die, and shalt not live,* tended not only to startle him, but deeply to wound and pierce his heart, as if God were rushing upon him in a hostile manner to destroy him. It was an alarming token of wrath to be thrown headlong out of life in the very flower of his age, and to be cast out of the world, as if he were unworthy of the society of men; and therefore he had to contend not only with death, but with hell itself and with frightful torments.

Hence it follows that he attached to the Prophet's words more meaning than they actually conveyed; for, although he could not all at once disentangle himself, yet the Holy Spirit suggested to his dark and confused heart "groanings that

could not be uttered." (Romans viii. 26.) And indeed it would have been a foolish message if God had not supported him by secret influence, when he appeared to have been slain by the external voice of his servant. But since he would never have aimed at repentance if he had been seized with despair, the slaying came first, and was next followed by that secret energy which dedicated the dead man to God.

3. *And said, I beseech thee, Jehovah.* He appears here to expostulate with God, and to remonstrate with him about his own past life, as if he were undeservedly distressed; but the case is far otherwise. On the contrary, he strengthens and fortifies himself against a heavy and dangerous temptation, which might otherwise have been suggested. For the great severity with which the Lord chastised him might lead him to think that the Lord had cast off, forsaken, and disapproved him, and had rejected all that he had formerly done. On this account he strengthens and encourages himself, and declares that whatever he did was done by him with a good conscience. In short, he concludes that, although he must die, still his services have not been displeasing to God, that he may thus open up for himself a path to prayer and good hopes.

Remember now that I have walked before thee in truth. He does not plead his merits against God, or remonstrate with him in any respect, as if he were unjustly punished, but fortifies himself against a sore temptation, that he may not think that God is angry with him for correcting the vices and removing the corruptions which prevailed throughout the whole of his kingdom, and especially in regard to religion. Yet the Lord permits his people even to glory, in some degree, on account of their good actions, not that they may boast of their merits before him, but that they may acknowledge his benefits, and may be affected by the remembrance of them in such a manner as to be prepared for enduring everything patiently. But sometimes the unreasonable conduct of their enemies constrains them to holy boasting, that they may commend their good cause to their judge and avenger; as David boldly meets the wicked slanders of enemies by pleading his innocence before the judg-

ment-seat of God. (Psalm vii. 8; and xvii. 2.) But here Hezekiah intended to meet the craftiness of Satan, which believers feel, when, under the pretence of humility, he overwhelms them with despair; and therefore we ought earnestly to beware lest our hearts be swallowed up by grief.

With a perfect heart. We learn from his words what is the true rule of a pious life; and that is, when integrity of heart holds the first place, for nothing is more abhorred by God than when we endeavour to deceive either him or men by our hypocrisy. Although the eyes of men are dazzled by the splendour of works, yet pretended holiness, which is as it were a profanation of his name, provokes his anger; and, because "he is a Spirit," (John iv. 24,) he justly demands spiritual obedience, and declares that he abhors "a double heart." (Psalm xii. 2.) Most properly, therefore, does Hezekiah begin with sincerity of heart. The Hebrew word שלם, (*shālēm,*) which is translated *perfect,* means nothing else than integrity as contrasted with hypocrisy, which is also evident from the use of the word *truth;* as Paul affirms that "the end of the law is brotherly love, out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith." (1 Tim. i. 5.)

And have done what is good in thine eyes. He brings forward also the fruits which spring from an upright heart as from a root, not only to confirm himself, but likewise to confirm others, in reference to those things which might have given any occasion of offence. Hezekiah therefore did not hesitate or waver, but wished to take away what might have given offence to many persons. But again, it ought to be observed in what manner we must regulate our life, if we desire that God shall approve of our conduct. We must do nothing but what is agreeable to his command; for, as he rejects and condemns all the pageantry of which hypocrites boast, so he likewise reckons of no value all the false worship in which foolish men weary themselves in vain, while they labour to obtain his favour by disregarding his word. Accordingly, Hezekiah, who knew that "obedience is of greater value than sacrifice," (1 Sam. xv. 22,) says not only that he ran, (which is often done in a disorderly manner,) but that he regulated his life in obedience to God, who alone is

competent to judge. Hence we may conclude how great was his earnestness in prayer; for though he sees on every hand nothing but the tokens of God's anger, yet he does not cease to fly to him, and to exercise faith, which all believers ought earnestly and diligently to do amidst the heaviest afflictions.

4. *Then came the word of Jehovah.* Isaiah had departed, leaving the sting, as the saying is, in the wound, reckoning as abandoned him on whom he had pronounced sentence in the name of God himself. Yet with what trembling uneasiness he was tormented, and even with what terror he was seized, may be partly learned from the song. What interval of time elapsed between the Prophet's departure and return we know not, but it is certain that the glad tidings of life were not brought until, after long and severe struggles, he perceived that he was utterly ruined; for it was a severe trial of faith that he should be kept plunged in darkness by the hiding of God's face. We have said that, while the doctrine of consolation was taken away, still the faith of the good king was not extinguished so as not to emit some sparks, because, by the secret influence of the Spirit, "groans that could not be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26) arose to God out of the gulf of sorrow. Hence also we conclude that, while "in the day of trouble" (Psalm l. 15) God heareth believers, yet the favour of God does not all at once shine on them, but is purposely delayed till they are sincerely humbled. And if a king so eminent in piety needed almost to suffer anguish, that he might be more powerfully excited to seek the favour of God, and, being almost wasted by grief, might groan from hell to God; let us not wonder if he sometimes permits us for a time to be agitated by fears and perplexities, and delays longer to bestow consolation in answer to our prayers.

But it may be thought strange that God, having uttered a sentence, should soon afterwards be moved, as it were, by repentance to reverse it; for nothing is more at variance with his nature than a change of purpose. I reply, while death was threatened against Hezekiah, still God had not decreed it, but determined in this manner to put to the test the faith of Hezekiah. We must, therefore, suppose a condition to be implied in that threatening; for otherwise Heze-

kiah would not have altered, by repentance or prayer, the irreversible decree of God. But the Lord threatened him in the same manner as he threatened Gerar for carrying off Sarah, (Gen. xx. 3,) and as he threatened the Ninevites. (Jonah i. 2; and iii. 4.)

Again, it will be objected, that it appears to be inconsistent with the nature of God to threaten what he does not intend to execute, and that it takes away from the authority of the word, and causes the promises and threatenings to have less weight. But what we have already said as to the sentence must likewise be maintained as to the form of the words. God threatened the death of Hezekiah, because he was unwilling that Hezekiah should die; and, indeed, it would have been unnecessary and even useless to predict it, if a remedy had not been provided. Now, as it was the purpose of God to humble his servant by fear and terror, that he might voluntarily condemn himself, and might thus escape punishment through prayer; so by harsh language and an absolute threatening of death, he intended to slay him, that, rising like a dead man out of the grave, he might feel that life had been restored to him. And thus we must suppose an implied condition to have been understood, which Hezekiah, if he did not immediately perceive it, yet afterwards in good time knew to have been added. Nor are we at liberty to infer from it that God used dissimulation by accommodating his discourse to the capacity and attainments of man; for it is no new thing if he "kill before he make alive." (Deut. xxxii. 39; 1 Sam. ii. 6.) In order to prepare Hezekiah by a spiritual resemblance of death, and gradually form him to a new life, he keeps back a part of the discourse.

5. *Thus saith Jehovah the God of David thy father.* At first, when he struck terror alone, he reckoned it enough to mention the bare and simple name of God, to whose heavenly judgment-seat he summoned him as a criminal; but now, when he brings consolation, he distinguishes God by a peculiar and honourable title, in order to point out the cause and origin of grace; as if he had said that, from a regard to his covenant which he made with David, he is inclined to mercy, so that he does not deal rigorously with Hezekiah. (2 Sam.

vii. 12.) We know that nothing is more difficult than for hearts that have been greatly alarmed by the conviction of God's anger to be encouraged to entertain favourable hope, so as to perceive that God is reconciled to them. That confirmation was therefore necessary, that the pious king, who in himself was ruined, might know that he could be again raised up to that life from which he had fallen; for the prophecy concerning the eternity of that kingdom could not fail. Since, therefore, he fainted when he thought that he had no hope of living, in order that he may breathe again, he is reminded of a promise, which at that time was universally known, that kings of the seed and posterity of David would always reign over the elect people, "as long as the sun and moon should shine in the heavens." (Ps. lxxxix. 36, 37.) That was the plank which he seized, and by which he escaped shipwreck.

David is not mentioned in this passage as a private individual, but as an eternal king, to whom had been committed the promise which might support Hezekiah; eternal, I say, not in himself, but in his blessed seed. Now, since that eternity was at length to be manifested in Christ, of whom Hezekiah along with other kings was a type, it must have been a solid ground of favourable hope that he was a son of David.[1] Whenever, therefore, we feel that our own sins hinder us from drawing near to God, in order that we may obtain his favour, let us think of this preface, that, although we have been estranged from him by our own fault, still he is the Father of Christ, who is our head, and "in whom our salvation always remains hidden." (Col. iii. 3.) In a word, God had lately spoken in the character of a judge, but now he is reconciled, and points out a Mediator who comes forth to appease him.

I have heard thy prayer. Having opened the door of hope, he tells Hezekiah that God "has heard his prayers." This ought greatly to encourage us to earnestness in prayer; for, although God of his own accord takes a deep interest in our salvation, and anticipates us by his kindness, not only

[1] "Puis qu'il estoit fils et successeur de David." "Since he was a son and successor of David."

while we are asleep, but "before we were born," (Rom. ix. 11,) yet, when he testifies that all the benefits which he bestows are granted in answer to our prayers, our negligence is altogether inexcusable, if, after having received such large invitations, we neglect to perform the duty of prayer.[1] And yet we must not imagine that prayers, to which God so graciously listens, are meritorious; but, in giving freely what he freely promised, he adds this as the crowning excellence of his kindness, in order more strongly to stimulate our faith. It is no ordinary privilege to be able to approach to him freely, and in a familiar manner to lay our cares in his bosom. If Hezekiah had not prayed, God would undoubtedly have secured that, in one way or another, some government of the kingdom should be preserved in the posterity of David; but what he would do from a regard to his truth, he says that he will give in answer to the prayers of Hezekiah, that he may acknowledge that he has obtained very abundant fruit from his faith which he exercised in prayer.

And I have seen thy tears. He mentions *tears* as a sign of repentance, and likewise of warmth and earnestness; not that in themselves tears procure favour, or have any power of appeasing God, but because they distinguish sincere prayers from those which are offered in a careless manner.

Behold, I add to thy days fifteen years. At length he adds that God has prolonged the life of Hezekiah to the extent of "fifteen years." This might, indeed, at first sight, appear to be absurd; for we were created on the condition of not being able to pass, by a single moment, the limit marked out for us; as Job also says, "Thou hast appointed his bounds which he cannot pass." (Job xiv. 5.) But the solution is easy. What is said about an extended period must be understood to refer to the views of Hezekiah, who had been excluded from the hope of life, and, therefore, must have justly reckoned to be gain what was afterwards added, as if he had been raised up from the grave to a second life.

6. *And I will deliver thee.* Those who think that Hezekiah was sick during the time of the siege found an argument

[1] "Si nous ne daignons ouvrir la bouche pour prier." "If we do not deign to open our mouth in prayer."

on this, that otherwise this promise would appear to be superfluous. But there is little force in that reasoning; for the Assyrian might have recruited his forces, and mustered a fresh army, at a later period, for the purpose of again invading Judea and attacking Jerusalem. The very defeat of which we have now read might have been a provocation to his rage and cruelty, so that the Jews had good reason for being continually alarmed at any reports which they heard.[1] That promise, therefore, is far from being superfluous, because along with life it promises protection from the enemy, against whom he would not otherwise have been secured, and may be regarded as an enlargement and increase of that blessing which the Lord promised to Hezekiah; as in the former chapter he promised abundance of fruits to accompany the deliverance. (Is. xxxvii. 30.)

7. *And this shall be a sign to thee.* The sacred history relates in the proper order that Hezekiah asked a sign from the Lord, (2 Kings xx. 8,) and that it was granted to him; which the Prophet will likewise mention at the end of this chapter. But it is no new thing for Hebrew writers to reverse the order of the narrative. God gives some signs of his own accord, without being asked; and he grants other signs to his people who ask them. Signs being generally intended to aid our weakness, God does not for the most part wait till we have prayed for them; but at first he appointed those which he knew to be profitable to his Church. If at any time, therefore, believers wished to have their faith confirmed by a sign, this circumstance, being rare, ought not to be produced as an example. Thus, to Gideon, whom he called from the sheepfold to govern Israel, he gave one sign and then another, when he asked them, (Judges vi. 17, 37, 39,) that he might be more fully convinced of his calling. He commonly gave, as we have said, other signs, in accommodation to the weakness of men; as to Adam the tree of life, (Gen. ii. 9,) to Noah the bow in heaven, (Gen. ix. 12,) and next the cloud and pillar of fire, (Exod. xiii. 21,) and the serpent of brass in the wilderness. (Numb. xxi. 8.)

[1] "Quand on leur apportoit nouvelles de l'ennemi." "When news were brought to them about the enemy."

The same remarks apply to the passover, (Exod. xii. 3,) and to all the sacraments, both those which were formerly observed, and those which have now been appointed by Christ,[1] and which no one asked from God.

But it may be thought that Hezekiah insults God, by refusing credit to his word, when he asks a sign. I reply, we must not accuse him of unbelief, because his faith was weak; for we shall not find any person who ever had faith which was perfect and complete in every respect. In seeking some assistance to support his weakness, he cannot be blamed on that account; for, having embraced the promise made to him by the Prophet, he shews his confidence in God by seeking a remedy for distrust. And if there had been no weakness in man, he would not have needed any signs; and consequently we need not wonder that he asks a sign, since on other occasions the Lord freely offers them.

Yet it is proper also to observe, that believers never rushed forward at random to ask signs, but were guided by a secret and peculiar influence of the Spirit. The same thing might be said about miracles. If Elijah prayed to God for rain and for drought, (James v. 17, 18,) it does not follow that others are at liberty to do the same. We must, therefore, see what God permits to us, lest, by disregarding his word, we bargain with him according to the foolish desires of our flesh.

8. *Lo, I bring back the shadow of degrees.* The sign which is here given to Hezekiah is the going back of the shadow on the sun-dial, along with the sun, *ten degrees by which it had already gone up,*[2] that is, had advanced above the horizon. And this sign bears a resemblance to the event itself, as all other signs generally do; for it is as if he had said, "As it is in my power to change the hours of the day, and to make the sun go backwards, so it is in my power to lengthen thy life." As to the shadow not going back as many degrees as there were years added to his life, that was impossible, be-

[1] "Tant sous le vieil que sous le nouveau testament." "Both under the Old and under the New Testament."

[2] This is evidently an oversight, but the author's reading is "ascenderat," which corresponds to the French version, "qu'il estoit monté." In CALVIN'S version, prefixed to the commentary on this chapter, ירדה (*yārādāh*) is correctly rendered "descenderat," that is, "had gone down."—*Ed.*

cause there were not more than twelve degrees on the sun-dial; for the day was divided by them into twelve hours, either longer or shorter, according to the change of the season. We need not, therefore, give ourselves any uneasiness about the number; it is enough that there is a manifest correspondence and resemblance.

On the sun-dial of Ahaz.[1] Here the Jews make fables according to their custom, and contrive a story, that the day on which *Ahaz* died was shorter than ten hours, and that what God had justly inflicted on him as a punishment for his sins was reversed for the benefit of Hezekiah; because the shortening of one day was the lengthening of another. But there is no history of this, and it is entirely destitute not only of evidence but of probability; nor is there anything said here about the death of Ahaz, or about the change which took place when he died, but about the sun-dial which he had made.

9. *The writing of Hezekiah.* Though sacred history gives no account of this writing, yet it deserves to be recorded, and is highly worthy of observation; for we see that Hezekiah was unwilling to pass in silence, or to bury in forgetfulness, so remarkable a blessing which he had received from God. By his example he shews what all believers ought to do, when God miraculously and in an unusual manner exerts his power on their behalf. They ought to make known their gratitude, not only to their contemporaries, but also to posterity; as we see that Hezekiah did by this song, which may be regarded as a public record. We see that David composed many psalms on this subject, when he had been delivered from very great dangers, so that he took care to celebrate till the end of the world what was worthy of being remembered by all ages. (Psalm xviii. 2, and xxvii. 1.) Especially, the more eminent any man is, and the higher the station which he occupies, the more is he bound to consider himself as placed by God on a theatre, and enjoined to perform this duty.[2] Yet all men, whether they be of ordinary

[1] See Note at the end of this volume.—*Ed.*

[2] "Doit considerer et savoir que ce que fait ici Ezechias, luy est enjoint en cas semblable." "Ought to consider and know that what Hezekiah does here is enjoined on him in a similar case."

rank or nobles and great men, ought to beware of ambition, lest, while they profess to imitate Hezekiah and David, they magnify their own name more than the name of God.[1]

10. *I said in the cutting off of my days.* This is a very melancholy song; for it contains complaints rather than prayers. Hence it is evident that he was oppressed by so great perplexity, that he was weary with groaning, and sunk in lamentations, and did not venture to rise up freely to form a prayer. Murmuring thus within himself, he expresses the cause and intensity of his grief.

As to the cause, it might be thought strange that he had so strong an attachment, and so ardent a longing for this fading life, and that he so much dreaded death. The tendency of the first elements of heavenly doctrine is, that we may learn to sojourn in this world, and to advance swiftly towards the heavenly life. Hezekiah appears to be as warmly devoted to the earth as if he had never had the smallest particle of piety; he shuns and abhors death, as much as if he had never heard a word about heavenly doctrine. Now, what purpose did it serve to commit to writing those stormy passions which would rather prompt readers to the same excess than induce them to obey God? For we are too prone to rebellion, though there be no additional excitements of any kind.

But when it shall be minutely, and wisely, and carefully examined, we shall find that nothing could have been more advantageous to us than to have this picture of a man overwhelmed with grief painted to the life. It was not the object of the good king, in proclaiming his virtues, to hunt for the applause of the world. His prayer was undoubtedly a proof both of faith and of obedience; but, as if he had been overcome by fear, and dread, and sorrow, he leaves off prayer, and feebly utters complaints. He unquestionably intended to make known his weakness, and thus to give a

[1] "The conjecture of Grotius, that Isaiah dictated the psalm, or put it into Hezekiah's mouth, is perfectly gratuitous. That Hezekiah should compose a psalm is not more strange than that he should make a collection of proverbs. (Prov. xxv. 1.) It would have been far more strange if one so much like David, in character and spirit, had not followed his example in the practice of devotional composition."—*Alexander.*

lesson of humility to all the children of God, and at the same time to magnify the grace of God, which had brought out of the lowest depths of death a ruined man.

As to the manner in which he deplores his lot, when he is near death, as if he placed his existence on the earth, and thought that death reduced men to nothing, we must attend to the special reason. For while death is not desirable on its own account, yet believers ought to "groan continually," (Rom. viii. 23,) because sin holds them bound in the prison of the flesh. They are forbidden also to "mourn as unbelievers usually mourn," (1 Thess. iv. 13,) and are even commanded to "lift up their heads," when they are about to depart from the world, because they are received into a happier life. (Luke xxi. 28.) Nor was the ancient Church under the Law destitute of this consolation; and, although the knowledge of a blessed resurrection was less clear, yet it must have been sufficient for mitigating sorrow.[1] If that impostor Balaam was forced to exclaim, "Let my soul die the death of the righteous," (Numb. xxiii. 10,) what joy must have filled the hearts of believers, in whose ears resounded that voice, "I am the God of Abraham!" (Exod. iii. 6.)

But although with steady and assured hope they looked forward to the heavenly life, still we need not wonder to see in Hezekiah what David confesses as to himself, (Psalm xxx. 9,) who yet, when his time was come, full of days, calmly left the world. (1 Kings ii. 10.) It is therefore evident that both of them were not assailed by the mere dread of death, but that they prayed with tears to be delivered from death, because they saw in it manifest tokens of God's anger. We ought to remember that the Prophet came as a herald, to announce the death of Hezekiah in the name of God. This messenger might naturally have plunged all the senses of Hezekiah into a frightful deluge of grief, so that, thinking of nothing but God's wrath and curse, he would struggle with despair.

Thus the piety of Hezekiah already begins to shew itself,

[1] "Pour adoucir la tristesse des fideles de ces temps-la." "For soothing the grief of the believers of that age."

when, placing himself before the tribunal of his judge, he applies his mind to meditation on his guilt. And, first, there might occur to him that thought by which David confesses that he was tempted: "What did God mean by treating his servants with cruel severity and sparing profane despisers?" (Psalm lxxiii. 3.) Next, he saw that he was exposed to the jeers of the wicked, by whom true religion also was basely reviled. He saw that it was scarcely possible that his death should not shake the minds of all good men; but especially, he was oppressed by God's wrath, as if he had been already condemned to hell and to the eternal curse. In a word, because our true and perfect happiness consists in having fellowship with God, Hezekiah, perceiving that he was in some measure alienated from him, had good reason for being so greatly alarmed; for that word, "Thou shalt die, and shalt not live," had seized his mind so completely, that he believed that he must die.[1] This is expressed by the phrase *I said;* for in Hebrew it does not mean merely to speak, or to pronounce a word, but to be persuaded or convinced in one's own mind. Even though hypocrites receive a hundred threatenings from God, still they look around them on all sides, so that if they see any opening by which they think that they can escape, they may mock God, and give themselves up to luxury and indifference. But Hezekiah, being a sincere worshipper of God, did not resort to subterfuges; but, on the contrary, believing the words of the Prophet, he concluded that he must prepare for dying, because it was God's good pleasure.

In this sense he speaks of *the cutting off of his days,* because he believed that an angry and offended God had broken off the course of his life; for he does not merely say in the ordinary manner that his life is cut short by a violent disease, but recognises that undoubted judgment of God as the cause of "the cutting off." Now, life is "cut off," whether we die at the entrance of life, or in middle life, or in old age; but they who are hurried away in the very flower of their age are said to be "cut off" from life, because they appear

[1] "Qu'il faisoit son conte de mourir." "That he laid his account with dying."

to die too soon, and before they have finished their course. The case was different with Hezekiah; for he perceived that the remaining part of life was "cut off" by the sword of God, because he had provoked God's wrath by his offences. Thus he complains that, as if he had been unworthy of enjoying it, God suddenly deprives him of life, which otherwise would have lasted longer. Such is the import of the phrase, "the residue of the years;" for although, being born mortal, we have reason to expect death every moment, yet since it was threatened as a punishment, he has good reason for saying that those years had been taken from him which he might have lived, if it had been the good pleasure of God.

11. *I said, I shall not see God.* Amidst such earnest longing for an earthly life, Hezekiah would have gone beyond bounds, if his grief had not been aggravated by the conviction of God's wrath. Since, therefore, he is violently dragged away by his own fault, as if he were unworthy of enjoying the ordinary light of the sun, he exclaims that he is miserable, because henceforth he shall never see either God or man. Among believers the statement would have been regarded as liable to this exception, that, so long as we dwell on the earth, we wander and are distant from God, but that, when the entanglements of the flesh shall have been laid aside, we shall more closely "see God."

In the land of the living. These words are indeed added as a limitation; but in this way Hezekiah appears to limit "the seeing of God" to the present life, as if death extinguished all the light of understanding. We must therefore keep in view what I formerly remarked, that when he received the message of God's vengeance, it affected him in such a manner as if he had been deprived of God's fatherly love; for if he was unworthy of beholding the sun, how could he hope for what was of higher value? Not that hope was altogether effaced from his mind, but because, having his attention fixed on the curse of God, he cannot so soon or so quickly rise to heaven, to soothe present grief by the delightfulness of a better life.

Thus it sometimes happens that godly minds are overclouded, so that they do not always receive consolation,

which for a time is suppressed, but still remains in their minds, and afterwards manifests itself. Yet it is an evidence of piety, that, by the proper and lawful object of life, he shews how grievous and distressing it is to be deprived of it. Even to cattle it gives uneasiness to die, but they have almost no use for their life except to feed and eat to the full; while we have a far more excellent object, for we were created and born on the express condition, that we should devote ourselves to the knowledge of God. And because this is the chief reason why we live, he twice repeats the name of God, and thus expresses the strength of his feelings; "I shall not see God, God in the land of the living."[1]

If it be objected that here we do not "see God," the answer is easy, that he is visible in his works; because "through the visible workmanship of the world," as Paul says, "his eternal power and Godhead are known." (Rom. i. 20.) Hence also the Apostle calls this world a mirror of invisible things. (Heb. xi. 3.) The more nearly he manifests himself to be known by believers, the more highly did Hezekiah value that spiritual beholding; as David also says that they see the face of God who confirm their faith by the exercises of piety in the sanctuary. (Psalm xlii. 2; lxiii. 2.) So far as relates to men, he grieves that he is withdrawn from their society, because we were born for the purpose of performing mutual kind offices to each other.

12. *My dwelling is departed.* He proceeds in his complaints, by painting his life under a beautiful metaphor; for he compares it to *a shepherd's tent.* Such indeed is the condition of human life in general; but he does not relate so much what happens to all universally as what has befallen himself as an individual. The use of *tents* is more common in those countries than in ours, and shepherds often change their residence, while they drive their flock from one place to another. He does not therefore say absolutely that men dwell in a frail lodging-house, while they pass through the world, but that, after he had dwelt at ease in a royal palace,

[1] "יה יה (*Yāhh Yāhh*) is not an error of the text for יהוה (*Yĕhōvāh* (Houbigant,) but an intensive repetition similar to those in verses 17, 19. Or the second may be added to explain and qualify the first. He did expect to see God, but not in the land of the living."—*Alexander.*

his lot was changed, just as if "a shepherd's tent" were pitched for two days in one field and afterwards removed to another.

I have cut off, as a weaver, my life. It is worthy of observation, that he indiscriminately ascribes the cause of his death, sometimes to himself, and sometimes to God, but at the same time explains the grounds; for when he speaks of himself as the author, he does not complain of God, or remonstrate that God has robbed him of his life, but accuses himself, and acknowledges deep blame. His words are equivalent to the proverbial saying, "I have cut this thread for myself, so that I alone am the cause of my death." And yet it is not without reason that he soon afterwards ascribes to God what he had acknowledged to have proceeded from himself; for although we give to God grounds for dealing severely with us, yet he is the judge who inflicts punishment. In our afflictions, therefore, we ought always to praise his judgment; because he performs his office when he chastises us as we deserve.

From lifting up he will cut me off. Some translate מִדַּלָּה (*mĭddăllāh*) "through leanness," or "through sickness," and others translate it "by taking away." The former derive this noun from דָּלַל (*dālăl*) which means "to diminish," and the latter from דָּלָה (*dālāh*) which means "to carry off by lifting up." But let my readers consider if the word "lifting up" be not more appropriate; for Hezekiah appears to complain that his life, while it tended to advance farther, was suddenly cast down; just as if God should cause the sun to set, while it was still ascending in the sky.

From day even to night. He now adds that in a short space of time he was brought down; and by this circumstance again expresses the severity of God's wrath; because he consumes men by the breath of a moment; for to be laid low in a single day means that men die very rapidly.

13. *I reckoned till the dawn.* Others translate it "I determined," or "I laid down." Here it means what we express by the ordinary phrase, (*Je fasoye mon compte,*) "I laid my account." From this verse it may be inferred that Hezekiah laboured two days at least under the disease; for in the

preceding verse he pronounced its severity to be so great that he expected immediate death. And now, when one day was past, he still waited *till the dawn*, and again, *from day even to night*, so that he said that he would die every moment. The meaning therefore is, that though he reached "the dawn," still through constant tossings he was hastening to death, because, having been struck by a terrible judgment of God, he cared nothing about his life; and as the Greeks, when they intended to say that nothing is more vain than man, said that he was (ἐφήμερον) "an *ephemeral* animal," that is, "the creature of a day," so Hezekiah means by "the life of a day" that which is fading and has no duration.

As a lion, so hath he broken my bones. The comparison of God to *a lion* ought not to be reckoned strange, though God is naturally "gracious, merciful, and kind." (Exod. xxxiv. 6.) Nothing certainly can more truly belong to God than these attributes; but we cannot be aware of that gentleness, when we have provoked him by our crimes and urged him to severity by our wickedness. Besides, there is no cruelty and fierceness in wild beasts that is fitted to strike such terror as we feel from the bare mention of the name of God, and justly; for the Lord's chastisements must have sufficient power to humble and cast us down to hell itself, so that we shall be almost destitute of consolation and regard everything as full of horror. In like manner also, we see that David has described these terrors, when he says that "his bones are numbered, his couch is moistened with tears, his soul is troubled, and hell is opened." (Ps. vi. 3-6; xxii. 17; xxxviii. 6.) Thus must the godly be sometimes terrified by the judgment of God, that they may be more powerfully excited to desire his favour.

14. *As a crane, or a swallow.* Hezekiah cannot satisfy himself in explaining the severity of his anguish. He now says that he was reduced so low that he could not utter an articulate voice, but muttered some confused sound, like persons who are almost at the point of death. Hence it is evident that his distress was excruciating; for the severity of the pain took away his voice, and his voice, he says, stuck in his throat; nothing was heard but indistinct groans.

Such is the import of these metaphors of "the crane and the swallow," which the Prophet employs. Still it is certain that this indistinct sound of the voice is nevertheless heard by God; though all our senses are oppressed by pain, and our throat is choked by grief, still God beholds our hearts and listens to godly sighs,[1] which will be even more powerful than plain and direct words, provided that the Spirit is present, who produces in us those "groanings that cannot be uttered," of which Paul speaks. (Rom. viii. 26.) There is no believer who does not feel that in prayer, when his heart is oppressed by any heavy sorrow, he either stammers or is almost dumb.

My eyes were lifted up on high. These words are translated by some, "My eyes are weakened;" but that would not agree with the phrase, "on high."[2] On this account we must adopt a simpler meaning, that, although Hezekiah's eyes were nearly worn out with weakness, so that he almost fainted, yet he did not cease to lift up his eyes to heaven; and that he never was stupified to such a degree as not to know that he ought to ask assistance from God. Let us therefore learn by the example of Hezekiah to lift up our eyes to heaven, when our hearts are afflicted and troubled; and let us know that God does not demand from us great eloquence.

O Lord, it hath oppressed me;[3] *comfort me.* He confirms the sentiment already expressed, by immediately directing his discourse to God and imploring his aid. Being oppressed by the violence of disease, he desires that God would be present to assist him. Some render the words, "Be surety for me;"[4] and the verb ערב (*gnārăb*) is often used in this sense;

[1] "Et exauce les souspirs faits en foy." "And listens to sighs heaved in faith."

[2] The sense of "lifting-up" belongs not to דלל (*dālăl*) but to דלה (*dālāh.*) Jerome adopted the sense of "weakened," and brought out the meaning by a supplement, in which he has been followed by almost all modern commentators. "My eyes were weakened (looking) on high." This rendering has been almost literally adopted in Diodati's *Italian* version." "I miei occhi erano scemati (riguardando) ad alto." Professor Alexander translates thus, "My eyes are weak (with looking) upward, or, on high.)"—*Ed.*

[3] "Le mal m' oppresse." "Disease oppresses me."

[4] "Undertake for me; rescue me out of the hand of the angel of death,

but it is more appropriate to say, "Comfort me," or "Cheer me." Or perhaps it will be thought preferable to translate, as some have done, "Cause me to rest." Undoubtedly he asks comfort from God, that he may not sink under the violence of disease; and we ought to be assured of this, that the greater the weight of afflictions that oppresses us, the more will God be ready to give us assistance.

15. *What shall I say?* This is generally supposed to be an exclamation, such as frequently bursts forth in a season of joy, as if he congratulated himself on having already obtained his wish. But I think differently. Hezekiah appears to proceed in his complaints; for he speaks as men commonly do when they are overcome by grief; "What shall I say? for *he who said it hath also done it;*" that is, "life and death are in his hand; *it is useless for me to argue or contend* with him; it is useless for me to complain." In the book of Job also words and sayings of this sort are often found. (Job vii. 4.) I think that this is the true meaning; for Hezekiah previously looked around on all sides to see if any assistance appeared, and now, when he sees that he is about to die, and that God has threatened it, he concludes that he ought no longer to resist but to obey.

Yet we ought to mark the emphatic statement, that God hath actually fulfilled what he had threatened by his word. They who explain it to mean simply, "what God said to me by the Prophet he hath fulfilled," express a part of the truth, but not the whole; for Hezekiah does not coldly relate that he has perceived the effect of the word, but, by bringing forward the power of God, he cuts off every occasion to murmur or complain. Thus also David says, "I am dumb, because thou hast done it." (Psalm xxxix. 9.) We never cease to complain until we are restrained by the fear of the power of God. Thus also Job, considering that he has to deal with

and answer for me, to deliver me. The word signifies 'answering,' or, as we say, 'suretiship;' as in that passage, Answer (or, be surety) for thy servant for good. (Ps. cxix. 122.)"—*Jarchi.* "Or, contend for me, undertake my cause; for thus, according to Jarchi, עשוק (*gnāshūk*) must be translated, if we read it with Sin, (not Schin,) as he appears to have done; and in the *Hebrew* copy which I have used the point is on the left horn of the letter."—*Breithaupt.*

God, says, "I will lay my finger on my mouth," (Job xl. 4,) and "I will humbly make supplication to my judge." (Job ix. 15.) Hezekiah, therefore, enjoins silence on himself on this ground, that it is useless to contend with God.

At the same time, he means that he has no hope of life, because the Lord gives actual demonstration that it was a serious threatening; and hence he infers that he gains nothing, because there are no means of evasion. This sentiment, it is true, proceeds from despair; because in this manner, thinking that God is his enemy, he shuts the door against his prayers. But that in very severe distresses words of this kind should escape our lips, which deter us from confidence in prayer, is neither new nor strange, provided that, on the other hand, we rely on that calling upon God which the views of the flesh pronounce to be of no avail. There is reason to believe that the pious king laboured under such perplexity that he fainted through weakness; but that he chiefly considered what I have said, that there was nothing preferable to silence, because that it would serve no purpose to dispute with God, will appear more clearly from what immediately follows.

I shall walk trembling[1] *all my life.* Hence we may infer that he now holds out to his view the dreadful power of God, in order to dispose himself to true humility. As דדה (*dādāh*) sometimes signifies "to move," and sometimes "to walk softly," אדדה (*ĕddădděh*) is translated by some commentators, "I shall be moved," or "I shall be troubled," and by others, "I shall walk softly." For my own part, I have no doubt that it denotes a trembling and feeble step; for Hezekiah had been reduced to so great weakness that he despaired of ever afterwards recovering his former strength. This trembling must be attributed to fear, for it immediately follows, *in bitterness;* which means, that the sorrow which he had endured was so deeply rooted in his heart, that it could never be removed. Hence arose that weakness which he mentioned.

אדדה (*ĕddădděh*) is translated by the Vulgate, "I will call to remembrance," on which account this passage has

[1] I shall go softly.—Eng. Ver.

been tortured by Papists to support auricular confession, but so absurdly that even old wives can laugh at it. But the plain meaning is, that Hezekiah does not speak of calling to remembrance, but of that agitation and trembling with which he says that he will be struck during the whole period of his life.

16. *O Lord, even to all who shall live after them.* The concise style of the Prophet has given rise to various interpretations. The interpretation most commonly received is—"O Lord, they shall live beyond those years,"[1] that is, "they shall lengthen their life." This is equivalent to saying, "When thou shalt have lengthened my life, thou wilt grant that others also shall enjoy the same favour." But that meaning does not agree with the text, and I look upon it as forced. I rather think that Hezekiah's meaning was this—"*O Lord, whosoever shall live beyond those years, to them also will the life of my spirit be known.*" We must therefore supply the relative אשר, (*ăshĕr,*) *who,* as the Hebrew writers frequently do, and there will be nothing forced in this interpretation; for there can be no doubt, and nobody denies it, that he speaks of the years which the Lord had lengthened out to him. Thus he means that this favour will be acknowledged not only by the men of that age, but also by posterity.

And didst cause me to sleep, and didst make me alive. In this way he magnifies the greatness of the favour, because it will also be well known to a future age, and will continue to be engraven on the remembrance of all, even when Hezekiah himself is dead, and not only so, but will be reckoned to be a kind of resurrection. By the word *sleep* he means death, as the Scriptures frequently do. (1 Cor xi. 30; 1 Thess. iv. 14; 2 Peter iii. 4.) Thus he compares this mortal disease to death; for he was so near death that he utterly despaired of life.

17. *Lo, in peace my bitterness was bitter.*[2] Again, another circumstance aggravates the severity of the distress;

[1] Outre ces ans-ci.

[2] "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness," or, "On my peace came great bitterness."—Eng. Ver.

for sudden and unexpected calamities disturb us more than those which come upon us in a gradual manner. The grievousness of the disease was the more insupportable, because it seized him suddenly while he enjoyed ease and quietness; for nothing was farther from his thoughts than that he was about to depart from this life. We know also that the saints sometimes rely too much on prosperity, and promise to themselves unvarying success, which David too acknowledges to have happened to himself, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved; but thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." (Psalm xxx. 6, 7.)

Nothing more distressing, therefore, could happen to Hezekiah than to be taken out of life, especially when the discomfiture and ruin of his enemy left him in the enjoyment of peace; for I think that Hezekiah fell into this disease after the defeat of Sennacherib, as has been already said. Amidst that joy and peace which smiled upon him, lo, a heavy sickness by which Hezekiah is fearfully distressed and tormented. This warns us that, since nothing is solid or lasting in this life, and since all that delights us may be speedily taken away, we ought not to grow sluggish in prosperity, but, even while we enjoy peace, we ought to think of war, and adversity, and afflictions, and, above all, to seek that peace which rests on God's fatherly kindness, on which our consciences may safely repose.

And thou hast been pleased (to rescue) my soul from the pit. This part of the verse admits of two meanings. Since the verb חשׁק (*chăshāk*) signifies sometimes "to love," and sometimes "to wish," that meaning would not be unsuitable, "It hath pleased thee to deliver my soul." But if nothing be understood, the style will be equally complete, and will flow not less agreeably, "Thou, O God, didst embrace my soul with favour and kindness, while it was lying in the grave."[1] It is well known that "soul" means "life;" but here the goodness of God is proclaimed, in not ceasing to love Heze-

[1] "Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of destruction." (This exactly agrees with our author's marginal reading.) "We have here another instance of pregnant construction, to love from, that is, so to love as to deliver from. This sense is expressed in the English Bible by a circumlocution."—*Alexander.*

kiah, even when he might be regarded as dead. In this way the copulative particle must be translated *But.*

For thou hast cast behind thy back all my sins. By assigning the reason, he now leads us to the fountain itself, and points out the method of that cure; for otherwise it might have been thought that hitherto he had spoken of nothing else than the cure of the body, but now he shews that he looks at something higher, namely, that he had been guilty before God, but by his grace had been forgiven. He affirms, indeed, that life has been restored to him, but reckons it of higher value that he has been reconciled to God than a hundred or a thousand lives. And, indeed, "it would have been better for us never to have been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24) than by living a long life to add continually new offences, and thus to bring down on ourselves a heavier judgment. He therefore congratulates himself chiefly on this ground, that the face of God smiles cheerfully upon him; for to enjoy his favour is the highest happiness.

At the same time he declares that all the distresses which God inflicts upon us ought to be attributed to our sins, so that they who accuse God of excessive severity do nothing else than double their guilt; and he does not only condemn himself for one sin, but confesses that he was laden with many sins, so that he needed more than one pardon. If, then, we sincerely seek alleviation of our distresses, we must begin here; because when God is appeased, it is impossible that it can be ill with us; for he takes no pleasure in our distresses. It often happens with us as with foolish and thoughtless persons, when they are sick; for they fix their attention on nothing but (*συμπτώματα*) symptoms or accidental circumstances, and the pains which they feel, and overlook the disease itself. But we ought rather to imitate skilful physicians, who examine the causes of disease, and give their whole attention to eradicate those causes. They know that outward remedies are useless, and even hurtful, if the inward cause be unknown; for such remedies drive the whole force of the disease inward, and promote and increase it, so that there is no hope of cure.

Hezekiah therefore perceived the cause of his distress,

that is, his sins; and when he had received the forgiveness of them, he knew that punishment also ceased and was remitted. Hence we see how absurd is the distinction of the Papists, who wish to separate the remission of punishment from the remission of guilt. But Hezekiah here testifies that punishment has been remitted to him, because guilt has been remitted.

We ought carefully to observe the form of expression which Isaiah employs, *thou hast cast behind thy back;* for it means that the remembrance of them is altogether effaced. In like manner, a Prophet elsewhere says that God "casteth them into the depths of the sea." (Mic. vii. 19.) It is likewise said in another passage, that he casteth them away "as far as the east is distant from the west." (Ps. ciii. 12.) By these modes of expression God assures us that he will not impute to us the sins which he has pardoned; and if, notwithstanding of this, he chastise us, he does it not as a judge, but as a father, to train his children and keep them in the discharge of their duty. Papists are mistaken in dreaming that punishments contain some kind of satisfaction,[1] as if God exacted vengeance, because he would not bestow a free pardon. But when God chastises his people, he promotes their future advantage.

18. *For hell shall not confess thee.*[2] When he says that he would not have celebrated the praises of God, if his life had been taken away, he promises that he will be thankful and will keep it in remembrance, and at the same time declares that the highest and most desirable advantage that life can yield to him is, that he will praise God. But although it is a sign of true piety to desire life for no other reason than to spend it in the unceasing praises of God, yet Hezekiah appears to employ language which is too exclusive; for the death of believers declares the glory of God not less than their life, and, being after death perfectly united to God, they do not cease to proclaim his praises along with the angels. Again, another question arises, "Why was Hezekiah

[1] "Satisfaction ou recompenses." "Satisfaction or compensations."

[2] "For the grave cannot praise thee."—Eng. Ver. "For the grave shall not confess thee."—*Alexander.*

so eager to avoid death and so earnestly desirous of an earthly life?" And though even this second question were answered, still the reader will likewise call to remembrance, that this terror was not produced by death alone, for the same Hezekiah, when his life was ended, did not resist, but willingly yielded to God; but that the pious king, when he had been struck by God's wrath, grieved only on this account, that by his sins he had excluded himself from life, as if he would never afterwards enjoy any favour or blessing.

On this also depends the answer to the first question; for we need not wonder if the pious king, not only supposing that he must depart out of life, but thinking that death is the punishment of sins and the vengeance of God, groan and weep that he is condemned as unworthy of devoting himself to the advancement of the glory of God. All who have been struck by this thunderbolt are unable, either living or dead, to celebrate the praises of God, but, being overwhelmed with despair, must be dumb. In the same sense also David says, "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall praise thee?" (Ps. vi. 5.) And the whole Church says, "The dead shall not praise thee, nor those that go down into silence." (Ps. cxv. 17.) The reason is, that they who are ruined and lost will have no ground of thanksgiving.

Yet it ought likewise to be observed that the saints, when they spoke in this manner, did not consider what kind of condition awaited them after death, but, under the influence of the pain which they now felt, looked only at the end for which they were created and preserved in the world. The chief object of life, as we said a little before, is that men should be employed in the service of God; and with the same design God protects his Church in the world, because it is his will that his name shall be celebrated. Now, he who sees himself cast down, because he does not deserve to be reckoned, or to hold a place, among the worshippers of God, does not calmly and attentively, consider what he shall do after death, but, under the darkening influence of grief, as if after death all the exercise of piety would cease, takes from the dead the power of praising God, because the glory of God appears to be buried along with the witnesses of it.

19. *The living, the living, he shall confess thee.* He does not include all men without exception ; for many *live*, who yet extinguish the glory of God by their ingratitude, as far as lies in their power, and undoubtedly have nothing farther from their thoughts than that they were born to praise God. But he simply declares that men, so long as God supports them in this life, may justly be regarded as the lawful heralds of his glory, when he invites them, by his kindness, to the discharge of that office. And this contrast shews that the statement which he made a little before, that "in death or in the grave there is no remembrance of God," is a general declaration, that they who would willingly be employed in praising God are deprived of this favour, when they are driven out of the world.

As I do this day. He solemnly declares that he will be one of the witnesses of the glory of God, and thus gives a manifest indication of gratitude towards God ; for he declares that he will not be forgetful, but will continually give thanks to God, and will make known the favour which he has received ; and that not only to the men of his own age, but also to posterity, that they too may celebrate those praises and adore the author of so great a favour.

The father shall make known to the sons thy truth. Hence we ought to learn a useful lesson, that children are given to men on the express condition, that every man, by instructing his children, shall endeavour, to the utmost of his power, to transmit the name of God to posterity ; and, therefore, the fathers of families are chiefly enjoined to be careful in this respect, that they shall diligently mention the benefits which God has bestowed on them. By the word *truth* he means that faithfulness which God exercises towards his people, and all the testimonies of his grace by which he proves that he is *true.*

20. *Jehovah to save me.*[1] He acknowledges that he was delivered, not by the aid or industry of men, but solely by the kindness of God. The rendering given by some, "It belongs to the Lord to save me," does not express enough, and appears to be more remote from the literal meaning ;

[1] "Le Seigneur m'a delivré." "The Lord hath delivered me."

for he praises not only the power of God, but also the work by which he hath given an evident proof of it. In a word, he contrasts God's *keeping* with the death to which he had been sentenced; because, having formerly dreaded him as a severe judge, he now avows him as his deliverer, and leaps with joy.[1]

And we will sing our songs. For the reason now stated, he not only prepares himself for singing in token of gratitude, but also calls on others to join and accompany him in this duty, and on this account mentions *the Temple*, in which the assemblies of religious men were held. Had be been a private individual and one of the common people, still it would have been his duty to offer a public sacrifice to God, that he might encourage others by his example. Much more then was the king bound to take care that he should bring others to unite with him in thanksgiving; especially because in his person God had provided for the advantage of the whole Church.

All the days of our life. He declares that he will do his endeavour that this favour of God may be known to all, and that the remembrance of it may be preserved, not only for one day or for one year, but as long as he shall live. And indeed at any time it would have been exceedingly base to allow a blessing of God so remarkable as this to pass away or be forgotten; but, being forgetful, we continually need spurs to arouse us. At the same time, he takes a passing notice of the reason why God appointed holy assemblies. It was, that all as with one mouth might praise him, and might excite each other to the practice of godliness.

21. *And Isaiah said.* Isaiah now relates what was the remedy which he prescribed to Hezekiah. Some think that it was not a remedy, because *figs* are dangerous and hurtful to *boils;* but that the pious king was warned and clearly taught by this sign that the cure proceeded from nothing else than from the favour of God alone. As the bow in

[1] "'The obvious ellipsis in the first clause may be variously filled with 'came, hastened, commanded, was ready, be pleased,' or with the verb 'is,' as an idiomatic periphrasis of the future, 'is to save' for 'will save."—*Alexander*.

the sky,[1] by which God was pleased to testify that mankind would never be destroyed by a flood, (Gen. ix. 13,) appears to denote what is absolutely contrary to this ; (for it makes its appearance, when very thick clouds are gathering, and ready to fall as if they would deluge the whole world ;) so they think that a plaster, which was not at all fitted for curing the disease, was purposely applied by the Prophet, in order to testify openly that God cured Hezekiah without medicines. But since figs are employed even by our own physicians for maturing a pustule, it is possible that the Lord, who had given a promise, gave also a medicine, as we see done on many other occasions ; for although the Lord does not need secondary means, as they are called, yet he makes use of them whenever he thinks proper. And the value of the promise is not lessened by this medicine, which without the word would have been vain and useless ; because he had received another supernatural sign, by which he had plainly learned that he had received from God alone that life of which he despaired.

22. *Now, Hezekiah had said.* Some explain this verse as if this also had been a sign given to Hezekiah, and therefore view it as connected with the preceding verse, and look upon it as an exclamation of astonishment. But it is more probable that in this passage the order has been reversed, as frequently takes place with Hebrew writers, and that what was spoken last is related first. Isaiah did not at the beginning say that Hezekiah had asked a sign, though the sacred history (2 Kings xx. 8) attests it ; and therefore he adds what he had left out at the proper place.

That I shall go up. He means that it will be his chief object throughout his whole life to celebrate the name of God ; for he did not desire life for the sake of living at ease and enjoying pleasure, but in order to defend the honour of God and the purity of his worship. Let us therefore remember that God prolongs our life, not that we may follow the bent of our natural disposition, or give ourselves up to luxury, but that we may cultivate piety, perform kind offices to each other, and frequently take part in the assembly of the godly

[1] "L'arc en la nuee." "The bow in the cloud."

and the public exercises of religion, that we may proclaim the truth and goodness of God.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

1. At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.

2. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

3. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, *even* from Babylon.

4. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that *is* in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

5. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts;

6. Behold, the days come, that all that *is* in thine house, and *that* which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord.

7. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

8. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good *is* the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken: he said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

1. Tempore illo misit Merodach Baladan, filius Baladan, rex Babel, ad Ezechiam literas et munus, ex quo audierat eum ægrotasse, et convaluisse.

2. Lætatus est autem de iis Ezechias, et ostendit illis domum thesauri sui, argentum et aurum et aromata, unguentum pretiosum, et omne armamentarium suum, et quicquid inveniebatur in thesauris suis: non fuit res ulla, quam non ostenderit Ezechias in domo sua, totoque regno suo.

3. Tum venit Isaias propheta ad regem Ezechiam, dixitque illi: Quid dixerunt viri isti? et unde venerunt ad te? Respondit Ezechias, E terra longinqua venerunt ad me, e Babel.

4. Tunc dixit: Quid viderunt domi tuæ? Et dixit Ezechias: Cuncta quæ domi meæ sunt viderunt; nec res ulla est, quam non illis ostenderim in thesauris meis.

5. Tunc ait Isaias Ezechiæ: Audi verbum Iehovæ exercituum.

6. Ecce dies veniunt, ut tollatur in Babylonem quicquid est domi tuæ, et quicquid recondiderunt patres tui ad hunc usque diem; nec residuum quicquam manebit, dicit Iehova.

7. E filiis tuis qui egressi fuerint ex te, quos genueris, tollent; eruntque eunuchi in palatio regis Babel.

8. Dixit Ezechias Isaiæ: Bonus est sermo Iehovæ quem pronuntiasti. Et dixit: Saltem erit pax et stabilitas in diebus meis.

1. *At that time.* Some think that this was the first king

of the Chaldee nation ; for his father, *Baladin*, had held the government over the Babylonians without the title of king. This Merodach, therefore, after having reigned twelve years, subdued the Assyrians, and made them tributaries to the Chaldeans ; for it is a mistake to suppose that the war was begun by Nebuchadnezzar. It is indeed possible that he completed the subjugation of them ; but it is probable that already they were half subdued, so that nothing else remained than to establish the royal power gained by the victory of his predecessor.

Sent letters and a present to Hezekiah. Although the Prophet simply relates that messengers were sent, yet it is of importance to observe that this was done craftily by the Babylonian, in order to flatter and cajole Hezekiah. He was at this time threatening the Assyrians, whom he knew to be justly disliked by the Jews on account of their continual wars ; and therefore, in order to obtain Hezekiah as an ally and partisan in the war which was now waging against him, endeavours to obtain his friendship by indirect methods. The mind of the good king was corrupted by ambition, so that he too eagerly accepted the false blandishments of the tyrant, and swallowed the bait.

The pretence was, to congratulate Hezekiah on having recovered from his disease. And yet sacred history appears to assign another reason, which was, that Merodach was induced by a miracle. (2 Chron. xxxii. 31.) There is certainly no doubt that the report of that prodigy, which took place when the sun went back, was very widely spread ; and it might have produced an impression on many nations. Yet it can hardly be believed that a heathen had any other object in view than to draw Hezekiah into his net ; but since, by a remarkable sign, God had shewn that he cared for the safety of Hezekiah, and since wicked men commonly apply to a base purpose all the proofs of God's favour, Merodach thought that, if he could obtain the alliance of Hezekiah, he would carry on war under the protection and favour of heaven.[1]

[1] " Que la guerre qu'il entreprendroit de faire auroit heureuse issue, et seroit benite du ciel." " That the war which he carried on would have a successful result, and would be blest of heaven."

The consequence was, that he sent messengers to Hezekiah with presents, for the sake of expressing his good-will; for he wished to obtain his favour, believing that his friendship would be useful and advantageous to him; and his intention was, to make use of him afterwards against the Assyrians, to whom he knew well that the Jews entertained a deadly hatred. Such are the designs of kings and princes, to transact their affairs by fraud and craftiness, and by some means to gain as many allies as possible, that they may employ their exertions against their enemies

2. *And Hezekiah was glad.* The Prophet performs the part of the historian; for he merely relates what Hezekiah did, and will afterwards explain why he did it; that is, that Hezekiah, blinded by ambition, made an ostentatious display to the messengers; while he censures an improper kind of joy, which afterwards gave rise to an eager desire of treating them in a friendly manner.

Any person who shall barely read this history will conclude that Hezekiah did nothing wrong; for it was an act of humanity to give a cheerful and hospitable reception to the messengers, and to shew them every proof of good-will; and it would have been the act of a barbarian to disdain those who had come to him on a friendly visit, and to spurn the friendship of so powerful a king. But still there lurked in his heart a desire of vain ostentation; for he wished to make a favourable display of himself, that the Babylonian might be led to understand that this alliance would not be without advantage to him, and might ascertain this from his wealth, and forces, and weapons of war. He deserved to be reproved on another ground, that he directed his mind to foreign and unlawful aid, and to that extent denied honour to God, whom he had recently known to be his deliverer on two occasions; for otherwise the Prophet would not have censured this act so severely.

This is a remarkable example; and it teaches us that nothing is more dangerous than to be blinded by prosperity. It proves also the truth of the old proverb, that "it is more difficult to bear prosperity than adversity;" for when everything goes on to our wish, we grow wanton and insolent, and

cannot be kept in the path of duty by any advices or threatenings. When this happened to Hezekiah, on whom the Prophet had bestowed the high commendation, that "the fear of God was his treasure," (Is. xxxiii. 6,) we ought to be very much afraid of falling into the same dangers. He is carried away by idle boasting, and does not remember that formerly he was half-dead, and that God rescued him from death by an extraordinary miracle. Formerly he made a solemn promise that he would continually celebrate the praises of God in the assembly of the godly, (Is. xxxviii. 20,) and now, when he sees that his friendship is sought, and that a powerful monarch sends to salute him, he forgets God and the benefits which he had received from him. When we see that this good king so quickly falls and is carried away by ambition, let us learn to lay upon ourselves the restraint of modesty, which will keep us constantly and diligently in the fear of God.

3. *Then came Isaiah the Prophet.* He continues the same narrative, but likewise adds doctrine. Although he does not say that God had sent him, yet it is certain that he did this by the influence of the Holy Spirit and by the command of God; and, therefore, he bestows on himself the designation of *the Prophet*, by which he intimates that he did not come as a private individual, but to perform an office which God had enjoined on him, that Hezekiah might clearly see that he had not to deal with a mortal man.

Now, when he says that he *came*, we ought to infer that he was not sent for, but was allowed to remain quietly at home, while Hezekiah was making a boastful display of his treasures; for prophets are not usually invited to consultations of this sort. But formerly, while he was weighed down by extreme distress, while Rabshakeh insulted him so fiercely, and uttered such daring blasphemies against God, he sent to Isaiah, and requested him to intercede with God, and to soothe his anguish by some consolation. (Is. xxxvii. 2, 3, 4.) Thus in adversity and distress the prophets are sought, but in prosperity are disregarded or even despised; because they disturb our mirth by their admonitions, and appear to give occasion of grief. But Isaiah *came*, though he was not in-

vited; and in this we ought to observe and praise his steadfastness, and are taught by his example that we ought not to wait till we are sent for by men who need the discharge of our duty, when they flatter themselves amidst the heaviest distresses, and bring danger on themselves either by levity, or by ignorance, or even by malice; for it is our duty to gather the wandering sheep, and we ought to do this diligently, even though we be not requested by any person.

Though Hezekiah may be justly blamed for having been corrupted by the flatteries of the king of Babylon so as not to ask counsel of God, yet it is a manifestation of no ordinary modesty, that he does not drive away or despise the Prophet, as if he had found fault without reason, but replies gently, and at length receives calmly and mildly a very severe reproof. It would have been better that he had, from the beginning, inquired at the mouth of God, as it is said in the psalm, "Thy commandments are the men of my counsel," (Ps. cxix. 24;) but, having committed a mistake, it was his next duty to receive submissively the remedy for the fault.

What did those men say? The Prophet does not immediately inflict on him the pain of a severe reproof, but wounds him gently, so as to lead him to a confession of his sin; for Hezekiah flattered himself, and thought that all was going well with him, and, therefore, needed to be gradually aroused from his slothfulness. Still these words gave a sharp wound; as if he had said, "What have you to do with *those men?* Ought you not to keep at the greatest distance from a plague so contagious?" He likewise inquires about the contents of the message, in order to make Hezekiah ashamed of not having perceived the deceit that was practised on him; for there is reason to believe that he would not have censured the congratulation, if there had not been some poison mingled with it, but he points out those snares in which the Babylonians wished to entangle him.

And yet it is evident from the reply, that Hezekiah was not yet struck by that gentle reproof; for he is still on good terms with himself, and boasts that those men came *from a distant country, from Babylon.* There is reason to believe that Isaiah was not ignorant of that country, so that Heze-

kiah did not need to express the distance in such magnificent language; but he boasts in this manner, because he was under the influence of ambition. It was therefore necessary that he should be more keenly pressed, and that sharper spurs should be applied.

4. *Then he said.* Isaiah proceeds in his indirect admonition, to see if Hezekiah shall be moved by it and displeased with himself. But still he does not succeed, though it can hardly be believed that the king was so stupid as not to feel the punctures of the spur; for he knew that the Prophet had not come, as persons addicted to curiosity are wont to do, for the purpose of hunting out news; and he knew also that the Prophet had not come to jest with him, but to state something of importance. However that may be, we ought to put a favourable construction on his mild reply; for he does not break out against the Prophet, but modestly confesses the state of the fact, though he does not yet acknowledge that he has sinned, or at least is not brought to repentance; for he does not judge of his sin from that concealed disposition. Ambition deludes men so much, that by its sweetness it not only intoxicates but drives them mad, so that, even when they have been admonished, they do not immediately repent. When, therefore, we see the godly Hezekiah struck with such stupidity as not to perceive that he is reproved, or at least not to be stung by it so as to know himself, we ought carefully to guard against so dangerous a disease.

5. *Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah.* From this judgment of God we perceive that the sin of Hezekiah was not small, though common sense judges differently; for since God always observes the highest moderation in chastising men, we may infer from the severity of the punishment that it was no ordinary fault, but a highly aggravated crime. Hence also we are reminded that men judge amiss of words or actions, but that God alone is the competent judge of them. Hezekiah shewed his treasures. Had they been heaped up, that they might always lie hidden in the earth? He received the messengers kindly. Should he have driven them away? He lent an ear to their instructions. But that was

when the rival of the Assyrian voluntarily desired his friendship. Ought he to have rejected so valuable an advantage? In a word, so far as appearances go, we shall find nothing for which an apology may not be offered.

But God, from whom nothing is hidden, observes in Hezekiah's joy, first, ingratitude; because he is unmindful of the distresses which lately pressed him down, and, in some respects, substitutes the Chaldeans in the room of God himself, to whom he ought to have dedicated his own person and all that he possessed. Next, he observes pride; because Hezekiah attempts too eagerly to gain reputation by magnificence and riches. He observes a sinful desire to enter into an alliance which would have been destructive to the whole nation. But the chief fault was ambition, which almost entirely banishes the fear of God from the hearts of men. Hence Augustine justly exclaims, "How great and how pernicious is the poison of pride, which cannot be cured but by poison!" For he has his eye on that passage in one of Paul's Epistles, in which he says that "a messenger of Satan had been given to buffet him, that he might not be puffed up by the greatness of revelations." (2 Cor. xii. 7.) Hezekiah was unshaken, when all was nearly ruined; but he is vanquished by these flatteries, and does not resist vain ambition. Let us, therefore, attentively and diligently consider what a destructive evil this is, and let us be so much the more careful to avoid it.

Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts. Being about to be the bearer of a harsh sentence, he begins by saying that he is God's herald, and a little afterwards, he again repeats that God has commanded him to do this, not merely for the purpose of protecting himself against hatred,[1] but in order to make a deep impression on the heart of the king. Here again we see his steadfastness and heroic courage. He does not dread the face of the king, or fear to make known his disease, and to announce to him the judgment of God; for although, at that time as well as now, kings had delicate

[1] "Non pas que pour crainte d'estre mal voulu, il se descharge sur le Seigneur." "Not that, through fear of bringing ill-will on himself, he throws the blame on the Lord."

ears, yet, being fully aware that God had enjoined this duty upon him, he boldly executes his commission, however much it might be disliked. Prophets were, indeed, subject to kings, and claimed nothing for themselves, unless when it was their duty to speak in the name of God; and in such cases there is nothing so lofty that it ought not to be abased before the majesty of God. And if his object had been to gain the good graces of his prince, he would have been silent like other flatterers; but he has regard to his office, and endeavours to discharge it most faithfully.

6. *And nothing shall be left.* It is proper to observe the kind of punishment which the Lord inflicts on Hezekiah; for he takes from his successors those things of which he vaunted so loudly, in order that they may have no ground for boasting of them. Thus the Lord punishes the ambition and pride of men, so that their name or kingdom, which they hoped would last for ever, is blotted out, and they are treated with contempt, and the remembrance of them is accursed. In a word, he overthrows their foolish thoughts, so that they find by experience the very opposite of those inventions by which they deceive themselves.

If it be objected that it is unreasonable, that the sacking of a city and the captivity of a nation should be attributed to the fault of a single man, while the Holy Spirit everywhere declares (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14-17) that general obstinacy was the reason why God delivered up the city and the country to be pillaged by the Babylonians; I answer, that there is no absurdity in God's punishing the sin of a single man, and at the same time the crimes of a whole nation. For when the wrath of the Lord overspread the whole country, it was the duty of all to unite in confessing their guilt, and of every person to consider individually what he had deserved; that no man might throw the blame on others, but that every man might lay it on himself. Besides, since the Jews were already in many ways liable to the judgment of God, he justly permitted Hezekiah to fail in his duty to the injury of all, that he might hasten the more his own wrath, and open up a way for the execution of his judgment. In like manner we see that it happened to David; for Scripture declares that it was

not an accidental occurrence that David numbered the people, but that it took place by the fault of the nation itself, whom the Lord determined to punish in this manner. "The anger of the Lord was kindled against the nation, and he put it into the heart of David to number the people." (2 Sam. xxiv. 1.) Thus in this passage also punishment is threatened against Hezekiah; but his sin, by which he provoked God's anger, was also the vengeance of God against the whole nation.

7. *Of thy sons.* It might be thought that this was far more distressing to Hezekiah, and therefore it is put last for the sake of heightening the picture. Even though any calamity spread widely in a nation, it is commonly thought that kings and their families will be exempted, as if they were not placed in the same rank with other men. When he understood, therefore, that his sons would be made captives and slaves, this must have appeared to him to be exceedingly severe. Hence again we may learn how much God was displeased with Hezekiah for seeking aid from earthly wealth, and boasting of it in the presence of wicked men, when God by a dreadful example punishes it as an unpardonable crime, that Hezekiah made an ambitious display of his wealth in presence of unbelievers.

8. *Good is the word of Jehovah.* From this reply we learn, that Hezekiah was not a stubborn or obstinately haughty man, since he listened patiently to the Prophet's reproof, though he was little moved by it at the commencement. When he is informed that the Lord is angry, he unhesitatingly acknowledges his guilt, and confesses that he is justly punished. Having heard the judgment of God, he does not argue or contend with the Prophet, but conducts himself with gentleness and modesty, and thus holds out to us an example of genuine submissiveness and obedience.

Let us therefore learn by the example of the pious king to listen with calmness to the Lord, not only when he exhorts or admonishes, but even when he condemns and terrifies by threatening just punishment. When he says that "the word of God is good," he not only gives him the praise of justice, but patiently acquiesces in that which might have

been unwelcome on account of its harshness; for even the reprobate have sometimes been compelled to confess their guilt; while their rebellion was not subdued so as to refrain from murmuring against their Judge. In order, therefore, that God's threatenings may be softened to us, we must entertain some hope of mercy, otherwise our hearts will always pour forth unavailing bitterness; but he who shall be convinced that God, when he punishes, does not in any degree lay aside the feeling of a father's affection, will not only confess that God is just, but will calmly and mildly bear his temporary severity. In a word, when we shall have a powerful conviction of the grace of God, so as to believe that he is our Father, it will not be hard or disagreeable to us to stand and fall according to his pleasure; for faith will assure us that nothing is more advantageous to us than his fatherly chastisement.

Thus David, having been very severely reproved by Nathan, humbly replies, "It is the Lord, let him do whatever is right in his eyes;"[1] for undoubtedly the reason why he is dumb is, not only because it would be of no use to murmur, but because he willingly submits to the judgment of God. Such is also the character of Saul's silence, when he is informed that the kingdom shall be taken from him. (1 Sam. xxviii. 20.) But because it is only punishment that terrifies him, and he is not moved by repentance for his sin, we need not wonder if he be full of cruelty within, though apparently he acquiesces, because he cannot resist, which otherwise he would willingly do, like malefactors who, while they are held bound by chains or fetters, are submissive to their judges, whom they would willingly drag down from the place of authority and trample under their feet. But while David and Hezekiah are "humbled under the mighty hand of God," (1 Pet. v. 6,) still they do not lose the hope of pardon, and therefore choose rather to submit to the punishment which he inflicts than to withdraw from his authority.

Which thou hast spoken. It is worthy of notice that he acknowledges not only that the sentence which God has pro-

[1] Our author, quoting from memory, relates the words, not of David to Nathan, (2 Sam. xii. 13,) but of Eli to Samuel. (1 Sam. iii. 18.)—*Ed.*

nounced is just, but that the word which Isaiah has spoken is good; for there is great weight in this clause, since he does not hesitate to receive the word with reverence, though it is spoken by a mortal man, because he looks to its principal Author. The freedom used by Isaiah might undoubtedly be harsh and unpleasant to the king; but acknowledging him to be the servant of God, he allows himself to be brought to obedience. So much the more insufferable is the delicacy of those who are offended at being admonished or reproved, and scornfully reply to teachers and ministers of the word, "Are not you men as well as we?" As if it were not our duty to obey God, unless he sent angels from heaven, or came down himself.

Hence also we learn what opinion we ought to form concerning fanatics, who, while they pretend to adore God, reject the doctrine of the prophets; for if they were ready to obey God, they would listen to him when he spoke by his prophets, not less than when he thundered from heaven. I admit that we ought to distinguish between true and false prophets, between "the voice of the shepherd (John x. 3, 5) and the voice of the stranger;" but we must not reject all without distinction, if we do not wish to reject God himself; and we ought to listen to them, not only when they exhort or reprove, but also when they condemn, and when they threaten, by the command of God, the just punishment of our sins.

At least[1] *there shall be peace.* The particle כִּי (*ki*) sometimes expresses opposition, but here it denotes an exception, and therefore I have translated it *at least;* for Hezekiah adds something new, that is, he gives thanks to God for mitigating the punishment which he had deserved; as if he had said, "The Lord might have suddenly raised up enemies, to drive me out of my kingdom; but he now spares me, and, by delaying, moderates the punishment which might justly have been inflicted on me." Yet this clause may be explained as a prayer,[2] expressing Hezekiah's desire that the punishment should be delayed till a future age. But it is more

[1] "For there shall be peace."—Eng. Ver.

[2] "Au moins qu'il y ait paix." "At least let there be peace."

probable that what the Prophet had said about the days that were to come, Hezekiah applied for soothing his grief, to encourage himself to patience, because sudden vengeance would have alarmed him still more. This exception, therefore, is highly fitted to induce meekness of spirit, "*At least* God will spare our age." But if any person prefer to view it as assigning a reason, "*For* there shall be peace,"[1] let him enjoy his opinion.

Peace and Truth. Some think that אמת, (*ĕmĕth,*) *Truth,* denotes the worship of God and pure religion, as if he were thanking God that, when he died, he would leave the doctrine of godliness unimpaired. But I consider it to denote "permanency," or a peaceful condition of the kingdom; if it be not thought preferable to view it as denoting, by the substitution of one word for another, that there will be certain and long-continued prosperity.

But it may be thought that Hezekiah was cruel in taking no care about posterity, and not giving himself much trouble about what should happen afterwards. Such sayings as, (ἐμοῦ θανόντος, γαῖα μιχθήτω πυρί,) "When I am dead, let the earth be committed to the flames," that is, "When I am dead, all are dead;" and other sayings of the same kind, which are now in the mouths of many swine and Epicureans, are profane and shocking. But Hezekiah's meaning was quite different; for, while he wished well to those who should live after him, yet it would have been undutiful to disregard that token of forbearance which God gave by delaying his vengeance; for he might have been led by it to hope that this mercy would, in some degree, be extended to posterity.

Some reply that he rejoiced at the delay, because "we ought not to be anxious about to-morrow, seeing that sufficient for the day is its own affliction." (Matt. vi. 34.) But this does not apply to the present passage; for Hezekiah does not disregard posterity, but, perceiving that God moderates the punishment by forbearance, he gives thanks to God, as we have already said; for although this punishment awaited a future age, still it was his duty to acknowledge the present favour. And indeed we ought to labour most for

[1] Car il y aura paix.

our own age, and to pay our chief regard to it. The future ought not to be overlooked; but what is present and immediate has stronger claims on our services; for we who live at the same time are bound by God with a stronger tie, in order that, by mutual intercourse, we may assist each other, as far as shall be in our power. It ought likewise to be observed that, while the Lord had formerly promised a lengthened life to Hezekiah, when he was very near death, there was now strong reason to fear that he would again cut short his life on account of that sin. When he is informed that the promise is ratified, he gives thanks to God, and bears more patiently the calamity which was to come, though he felt it to be grievous and distressing.

CHAPTER XL.

1. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

3. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken *it*.

6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodliness thereof *is* as the flower of the field:

7. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass.

8. The grass withereth, the flower

1. Consolamini, consolamini populum meum, dicit Deus vester.

2. Loquimini secundum cor Ierusalem, et clamate ad eam, quod impleta sit militia ejus, quod remissa sit iniquitas (*vel*, *miseria*) ejus, quoniam accepit e manu Iehovæ duplicia in omnibus peccatis suis.

3. Vox clamans in deserto: Parate viam Iehovæ; Dirigite in solitudine semitam Deo nostro.

4. Omnis vallis exaltabitur, et omnis mons et collis humiliabitur; et erit præruptum in rectitudinem, et loca confragosa in planiciem.

5. Et revelabitur gloria Iehovæ, videbitque omnis caro pariter, quòd os Iehovæ loquutum sit.

6. Vox dixit (*vel*, *dicebat*): Clama. Et dixi, Quid clamabo? Omnis caro herba, et omnis gratia ejus quasi flos campi.

7. Exaruit herba, emarcuit flos, quia spiritus Iehovæ sufflavit in eo. Sane herba est populus.

8. Arescit herba, emarcet flos.

fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift *it* up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

10. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

11. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young.

12. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

13. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, *being* his counsellor, hath taught him?

14. With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

15. Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

16. And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering.

17. All nations before him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

18. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

19. The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.

20. He that *is* so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a

At sermo Dei nostri stabit in æternum.

9. Ascende in montem excelsum, annuntiatrix Sion; attolle fortiter vocem tuam, annuntiatrix Ierusalem. Attolle, ne timeas. Dic civitatibus Iuda: Ecce Deus vester.

10. Ecce Dominus Iehova in robore veniet; et brachium ejus sibi potens. Ecce merces ejus cum eo, et opus ejus coram ipsius facie.

11. Sicuti pastor gregem suam pascet, brachio suo colliget agnos, sinu suo portabit, fœtus suaviter ducet.

12. Quis mensus est pugillo suo aquas, et cœlos palma mensus est, et comprehendit tribus digitis pulverem terræ, et appendit montes in statera, et colles in trutina?

13. Quis erudivit Spiritum Iehovæ, aut consilio eum instruxit, et eum docuit?

14. A quo petiit consilium, ut eum moneret? et docuit eum semitam judicii, erudivit scientia, et viam prudentiæ ostendit ei?

15. En gentes quasi gutta situlæ, et quasi pulvisculus trutinæ reputantur; en insulas quasi rem minimam tollit.

16. Nec Libanus sufficeret ad incendium, nec bestiæ ejus ad holocaustum.

17. Omnes gentes quasi nihilum sunt coram eo, et præ ipso reputantur minus quam nihil, et quod non est.

18. Cui igitur similem fecistis Deum, aut quam similitudinem ordinabitis ei?

19. Artifex parat sculptile, aurifaber aurum aptat illi, et catenas argenteas (conflat) aurifaber.

20. Pauper oblationi eligit lignum quod non putrescat; artificem

tree *that* will not rot: he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, *that* shall not be moved.

21. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?

22. *It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in;

23. That bringeth the princes to nothing: he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

24. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

25. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power; not one faileth.

27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

28. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no searching of his understanding.

29. He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength.

30. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as

peritum quærit sibi qui sculptile præparet, ne moveatur.

21. An nescitis? An non audistis? An non vobis annuntiatum est ab initio? An non edocti estis a fundamentis terræ?

22. Is sedet super gyrum terræ, cujus habitatores sunt veluti locustæ, extendit cœlum ut cortinam; expandit, inquam, quasi tentorium, ut inhabitetur.

23. Redigit potentes in nihilum, gubernatores terræ quasi non sint.

24. Perinde ut non plantati, perinde ut non sati, perinde acsi non radix in terra stirps eorum. Etiam dum sufflat in eos arescunt, et turbo quasi stipulam aufert eos.

25. Et cui assimilabitis me, ut similis sim? dicit Sanctus.

26. Tollite in sublime oculos vestros, et aspicite quis creaverit ea producens ad numerum exercitum eorum; omnibus nominatim acclamabit; a magnitudine virium et robore fortitudinis nullum deficiet (*vel, deerit*).

27. Quare dices, Iacob, et loqueris Israel? Abscondita est via mea ab Iehova, et a Deo meo judicium meum transit.

28. An non scivisti? An non audiisti (quòd) Deus seculi sit Iehova, qui fines terræ creavit? Non laborat, nec lassitudine fatigatur; et non est investigatio intelligentiæ ejus.

29. Dat lasso virtutem, et cui nihil est virium robur suppeditat.

30. Fatigantur adolescentes et lassantur; juvenes cadendo cadunt.

31. At expectantes Iehovam vires novas colligent; sustollent alas ut aquilæ; current, nec fati-

eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

gabuntur; ambulabunt, nec deficient.

1. *Comfort ye.* The Prophet introduces a new subject; for, leaving the people on whom no favourable impression was made either by threatenings or by admonitions, on account of their desperate wickedness, he turns to posterity, in order to declare that the people who shall be humbled under the cross will experience no want of consolation even amidst the severest distresses. And it is probable that he wrote this prophecy when the time of the captivity was at hand, that he might not at his departure from life leave the Church of God overwhelmed by very grievous calamities, without the hope of restoration. Though he formerly mingled his predictions with threatenings and terrors for this purpose, yet he appears to have contemplated chiefly the benefit of those who lived at that time. What will afterwards follow will relate to the future Church, the revival of which was effected long after his death; for he will next lay down a perpetual doctrine, which must not be limited to a single period, and especially when he treats of the commencement and progress of the reign of Christ. And this prophecy must be of so much the greater importance to us, because it addresses us in direct terms; for, although it may be a spiritual application of what goes before, so as to be doctrine that is common both to the Jews and to us, yet, as he leaves the Jews of that age, and addresses posterity down to the end of the world, it appears to belong more especially to us.

By this exhortation, therefore, the Lord intended to stir up the hearts of the godly, that they might not faint amidst heavy calamities. First, he addresses the Jews, who were soon after to be carried into that hard captivity in which they should have neither sacrifices nor prophets, and would have been destitute of all consolation, had not the Lord relieved their miseries by these predictions. Next, he addresses all the godly that should live afterwards, or that shall yet live, to encourage their heart, even when they shall appear to be reduced very low and to be utterly ruined.

That this discourse might have greater weight, and might more powerfully affect their minds, he represents God as

raising up new prophets, whom he enjoins to soothe the sorrows of the people by friendly consolation. The general meaning is, that, when he shall have appeared to have forsaken for a time the wretched captives, the testimony of his grace will again burst forth from the darkness, and that, when gladdening prophecies shall have ceased, their proper time will come round. In order to exhibit more strongly the ground of joy, he makes use of the plural number, *Comfort ye;* by which he intimates that he will send not one or another, but a vast multitude of prophets; and this he actually accomplished, by which we see more clearly his infinite goodness and mercy.

Will say. First, it ought to be observed that the verb is in the future tense; and those commentators who render it in the present or past tense both change the words and spoil the meaning. Indirectly he points out an intermediate period, during which the people would be heavily afflicted, as if God had been silent.[1] Though even at that time God did not cease to hold out the hope of salvation by some prophets, yet, having for a long period cast them off, when they were wretchedly distressed and almost ruined, the consolation was less abundant, till it was pointed out, as it were with the finger, that they were at liberty to return. On this account the word *comfort* must be viewed as relating to a present favour; and the repetition of the word not only confirms the certainty of the prediction, but applauds its power and success, as if he had said, that in this message there will be abundant, full, and unceasing cause of joy.

Above all, we must hold by the future tense of this verb, because there is an implied contrast between that melancholy silence of which I have spoken, and the doctrine of consolation which afterwards followed. And with this prediction agrees the complaint of the Church, "We do not see our signs; there is no longer among us a prophet or any one that knows how long." (Psalm lxxiv. 9.) We see how she laments that she has been deprived of the best kind of comfort, because no promise is brought forward for soothing her distresses. It is as if the Prophet had said, "The Lord will

[1] "Comme si Dieu n'en eust rien veu." "As if God had not at all seen it."

not suffer you to be deprived of prophets, to comfort you amidst your severest distresses. At that time he will raise up men by whom he will send to you the message that had been long desired, and at that time also he will shew that he takes care of you."

I consider the future tense, *will say*, as relating not only to the captivity in Babylon, but to the whole period of deliverance, which includes the reign of Christ.[1] To the verb *will say*, we must supply "to the prophets," whom he will appoint for that purpose; for in vain would they have spoken, if the Lord had not told them, and even put into their mouth what they should make known to others. Thus there is a mutual relation between God and the prophets. In a word, the Lord promises that the hope of salvation will be left, although the ingratitude of men deserves that this voice shall be perpetually silenced and altogether extinguished.

These words, I have said, ought not to be limited to the captivity in Babylon; for they have a very extensive meaning, and include the doctrine of the gospel, in which chiefly lies the power of "comforting." To the gospel it belongs to comfort those who are distressed and cast down, to quicken those who are slain and actually dead, to cheer the mourners, and, in short, to bring all joy and gladness; and this is also the reason why it is called "the Gospel," that is, good news.[2] Nor did it begin at the time when Christ appeared in the world, but long before, since the time when God's favour was clearly revealed, and Daniel might be said to have first raised his banner, that believers might hold themselves in readiness for returning. (Daniel ix. 2.) Afterwards, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Nehemiah, Ezra, and others, down to the coming of Christ, exhorted believers to cherish better and better hopes. Malachi, the last of them that wrote, knowing that there would be few prophets, sends the people to the law of Moses, to learn from it the will of God and its threatenings and promises. (Malachi iv. 4.)

Your God. From this passage we learn what we ought

[1] "Qui comprend en soy le regne de Christ jusqu' a la fin du monde." "Which includes the reign of Christ till the end of the world."

[2] Evangile, c'est à dire Bonne nouvelle.

chiefly to seek in the prophets, namely, to encourage the hopes of godly persons by exhibiting the sweetness of divine grace, that they may not faint under the weight of afflictions, but may boldly persevere in calling on God. But since it was difficult to be believed, he reminds them of the covenant; as if he had said that it was impossible for God ever to forget what he formerly promised to Abraham. (Genesis xvii. 7.) Although, therefore, the Jews by their sins had fallen from grace, yet he affirms that he is *their God*, and that they are his peculiar people, both of which depended on election; but as even in that nation there were many reprobates, the statement implies that to believers only is this discourse strictly directed; because he silently permits unbelievers, through constant languishment, to be utterly wasted and destroyed. But to believers there is held out an invaluable comfort, that, although for a time they are oppressed by grief and mourning, yet because they hope in God, who is the Father of consolation, they shall know by experience that the promises of grace, like a hidden treasure, are laid up for them, to cheer their hearts at the proper time. This is also a very high commendation of the prophetic office, that it supports believers in adversity, that they may not faint or be discouraged; and, on the other hand, this passage shews that it is a very terrible display of God's vengeance when there are no faithful teachers, from whose mouth may be heard in the Church of God the consolation that is fitted to raise up those who are cast down, and to strengthen the feeble.

2. *Speak ye according to the heart of Jerusalem.* Here God commands his servants the prophets, and lays down the message which he wishes them to deliver publicly, when believers shall be called to change their strain from mourning to joy. And yet he does not exhort and encourage them to the cheerful and courageous discharge of their office, so much as he conveys to the minds of believers an assured hope that they may patiently endure the irksomeness of delay, till the prophets appear with this glad and delightful message. To *speak to the heart*[1] is nothing else than "to speak according

[1] "Selon le coeur;" "according to the heart." Our author employs both "secundum cor" and "ad cor."—*Ed.*

to the wish or sentiment of the mind;" for our heart abhors or recoils if any sad intelligence is communicated, but eagerly receives, or rather runs to meet, whatever is agreeable. Now, in consequence of the people having been apparently rejected, nothing could be more agreeable than a reconciliation[1] which should blot out all offences. By a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, *Jerusalem*, as is well known, denotes the Church.

And cry to her. The word *cry* means that the promise of this grace will be open and manifest, so as to resound in the ears of all and be understood; for if prophets only muttered or spoke indistinctly, the belief of this consolation would be doubtful or weak, but now that they publish it boldly and with open mouth, all doubts are removed.

That her warfare is accomplished. This is the desirable message, that the Lord determines to put an end to the warfare of his people. I consider כִּי (*ki*) to be used for introducing an explanation. Some think that צִבְאָהּ, (*tzĕbāāhh,*) which we have translated "her warfare," simply denotes "time," as if it had been said, "her time is accomplished."[2] Others think that it expresses the time of visitation, but this is incorrect; for among the Hebrews it literally denotes a time previously appointed and set apart for lawful work or labour. (Numbers iv. 23.) But here unquestionably the metaphor is taken from the discharge of soldiers; for it means that the end and issue of their vexations is at hand, and that God does not wish to harass his people continually, but to set a limit to their afflictions. He therefore compares the time of the captivity in Babylon to a righteous warfare, at the end of which the soldiers, having obtained an honourable discharge, will return home to enjoy peace and quietness.

That her iniquity is pardoned. This means that God is so gracious to them that he is unwilling to treat them with the utmost severity. These words, therefore, assign a reason; for, as physicians, in curing diseases, first remove the

[1] "La reconciliation avec Dieu." "The reconciliation with God."

[2] Que nous avons traduit Guerre, pour "le temps," comme s'il estoit dit, Son temps est accompli.

causes from which diseases arise, so does the Lord deal with us. The scourges by which he chastises us proceed from our sins; and therefore, that he may cease to strike, he must first pardon us; and consequently, he says that there will be an end of punishments, because he no longer imputes sin. Others think that עונה (*gnăvōnāhh*) means "her misery," and that it denotes that her misery is ended. This meaning also is highly appropriate, and thus the Prophet will make the same announcement in two ways; for to finish her warfare, and to put an end to her miseries, mean the same thing. Yet we must hold this principle, that God ceases from inflicting punishment when he is appeased, so that pardon and the forgiveness of sins always come first in order, as the cause. But the word נרצה (*nĭrtzāh*) demands, in my opinion, the former meaning; as if he had said, that God has been appeased in such a manner that, having pardoned and forgiven their sins, he is ready to enter again into a state of favour with his people.

Double for all her sins. This passage is explained in two ways. Some say that the people, having deserved a double punishment, have obtained a double favour; and others, that they have received enough of punishment, because God is unwilling to exact more. The former interpretation, though it contains an excellent and profitable doctrine, does not agree with the text, and must therefore be set aside; and it is evident that the Prophet means nothing else than that God is abundantly satisfied with the miseries which have befallen his Church. I could have wished, therefore, that they who have attacked Jerome and other supporters of this interpretation, had been more moderate; for the natural meaning belongs to this interpretation, and not to the more ingenious one, that the Lord repays double favour for their sins. The general meaning is, that God is unwilling to inflict more severe or more lengthened punishment on his people, because, through his fatherly kindness, he is in some sense displeased with the severity.

Here the word *double* denotes "large and abundant." It must not be imagined that the punishments were greater than the offences, or equal to them; for we ought to abhor

the blasphemy of those who accuse God of cruelty, as if he inflicted on men excessively severe punishment; for what punishment could be inflicted that was sufficiently severe even for the smallest offence? This must therefore relate to the mercy of God, who, by setting a limit to the chastisements, testifies that he is unwilling to punish them any more or longer, as if he were abundantly satisfied with what had gone before, though that nation deserved far severer chastisements. God sustains the character of a Father who, while he compassionates his children, is led, not without reluctance, to exercise severity, and thus willingly bends his mind to grant forgiveness.

3. *A voice crying in the wilderness.* He follows out the subject which he had begun, and declares more explicitly that he will send to the people, though apparently ruined, ministers of consolation. At the same time he anticipates an objection which might have been brought forward. "You do indeed promise consolation, but where are the prophets? For we shall be 'in a wilderness,' and whence shall this consolation come to us?" He therefore testifies that "the wilderness" shall not hinder them from enjoying that consolation.

The wilderness is employed to denote metaphorically that desolation which then existed; though I do not deny that the Prophet alludes to the intermediate journey;[1] for the roughness of the wilderness seemed to forbid their return. He promises, therefore, that although every road were shut up, and not a chink were open, the Lord will easily cleave a path through the most impassable tracts for himself and his people.

Prepare the way of Jehovah. Some connect the words "in the wilderness" with this clause, and explain it thus,—"Prepare the way of Jehovah in the wilderness." But the Prophet appears rather to represent a voice which shall gather together those who had wandered and had, as it were, been banished from the habitable globe. "Though you behold nothing but a frightful desert, yet this voice of consola-

[1] "Au chemin d'entre Iudee et Babylone." "To the road between Judea and Babylon."

tion shall be heard from the mouth of the prophets." These words relate to the hard bondage which they should undergo in Babylon.

But to whom is that voice addressed? Is it to believers? No, but to Cyrus, to the Persians, and to the Medes, who held that people in captivity. Having been alienated from obedience to God, they are constrained to deliver the people; and therefore they are enjoined to "prepare and pave the way," that the people of God may be brought back to Judea; as if he had said, "Make passable what was impassable." The power and efficacy of this prediction is thus held up for our applause; for when God invests his servants with authority to command men who were cruel and addicted to plunder, and who at that time were the conquerors of Babylon, to "prepare the way" for the return of his people, he means that nothing shall hinder the fulfilment of his promise, because he will employ them all as hired servants. Hence we obtain an excellent consolation, when we see that God makes use of irreligious men for our salvation, and employs all the creatures, when the case demands it, for that end.

A highway for our God. When it is said that the way shall be prepared not for the Jews, but for God himself, we have here a remarkable proof of his love towards us; for he applies to himself what related to the salvation of his chosen people. The Lord had nothing to do with walking, and had no need of a road; but he shews that we are so closely united to him that what is done on our account he reckons to be done to himself. This mode of expression is frequently employed elsewhere, as when it is said that God "went forth into battle with his anointed," (Hab. iii. 13,) and that "he rode through the midst of Egypt," (Exod. xi. 4,) and that he lifted up his standard and led his people through the wilderness. (Isaiah lxiii. 13.)

This passage is quoted by the Evangelists, (Matt. iii. 3; Mark i. 3; Luke iii. 4,) and applied to John the Baptist, as if these things had been foretold concerning him, and not unjustly; for he held the highest rank among the messengers and heralds of our redemption, of which the deliverance from Babylon was only a type. And, indeed, at the time when

the Church arose out of her wretched and miserable condition, her mean appearance bore a stronger resemblance than the Babylonish captivity to a "wilderness;" but God wished that they should see plainly, in the wilderness in which John taught, the image and likeness of that miserably ruinous condition by which the whole beauty of the Church was injured and almost destroyed. What is here described metaphorically by the Prophet was at that time actually fulfilled; for at an exceedingly disordered and ruinous crisis John lifted up the banner of joy. True, indeed, the same voice had been previously uttered by Daniel, Zechariah, and others; but the nearer the redemption approached, the more impressively could it be proclaimed by John, who also pointed out Christ with the finger. (John i. 29.) But because, in the midst of a nation which was ignorant and almost sunk in stupidity, there were few that sincerely grieved for their ruinous condition, John sought a wilderness, that the very sight of the place might arouse careless persons to hope and desire the promised deliverance. As to his denying that he was a Prophet, (John i. 21,) this depends on the end of his calling and the substance of his doctrine; for he was not sent to discharge apart any continued office, but, as a herald, to gain an audience for Christ his Master and Lord. What is here said about removing obstructions, he applies skilfully to individuals, on this ground, that the depravity of our nature, the windings of a crooked mind, and obstinacy of heart, shut up the way of the Lord, and hinder them from preparing, by true self-denial, to yield obedience.

4. *Every valley shall be exalted.* He confirms and asserts the preceding statement; for he shews that no difficulties can prevent the Lord from delivering and restoring his Church whenever he shall think fit. These words might with propriety be rendered in the imperative mood, "Let every valley be exalted,"[1] so as to be placed in immediate

[1] "*Grotius* supposes the command at the beginning of the chapter to be still continued, ('Let every valley, &c.,) and the latest German writers give the same construction of this verse, although they make a new command begin in the one preceding. The form of the following verb והיה, (*vĕhāyāh.*) though not incompatible with this explanation, rather favours

connection with the command which God gives by his prophets to prepare and level the way for himself; but it makes hardly any difference in the meaning. Let us be satisfied with understanding the Prophet's design, "that, although many and formidable difficulties are started to hinder the salvation of the Church, still the hand of God will be victorious and will prevail."

And every mountain and hill shall be laid low. It ought to be observed that many obstructions always arise whenever God makes provision for our deliverance, or wishes to aid the afflicted; and although his glory is more fully displayed by these obstructions, yet we suffer no loss; for we behold more clearly his wonderful power when no strength, or efforts, or contrivances of men can prevent him from gaining his object. He conducts his people through "mountains" and steep places in such a manner as if the road were perfectly level; and by the words *mountains and hills*, the Prophet undoubtedly intends to denote metaphorically obstructions of every kind; for Satan attempts in every way to hinder our salvation. When we come, therefore, to spiritual redemption, these words undoubtedly include both internal and external obstacles,—lusts and wicked desires, ambition, foolish confidence, and impatience, which retard us wonderfully, but the Lord will break them all down; for when he stretches out his hand, nothing can restrain or drive him back.

5. *And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed.* He means that this work of redemption will be splendid, so that the Lord will shew that he is the Author of it, and will illustriously display his majesty and power. This, indeed, is very openly manifested in all places and in all events, but he promises that he will do this especially in protecting and delivering his Church, and not without good reason; for the deliverance of the Church, from its commencement down to the coming of Christ, might be called a renewal of the world.[1] And because the power of God, which he had

the strict interpretation of the future, which is, of course, on general principles to be preferred."—*Alexander.*

[1] "Un renouvellement incroyable, ou seconde creation du monde." "An incredible renewal or second creation of the world."

formerly been accustomed to display, was almost extinguished, so that scarcely the slightest traces were discernible, as it is said in the Psalm, "We do not see our signs," (Psalm lxxiv. 9;) this was a very seasonable warning, that a new and striking demonstration is promised, by which they may perceive that God has in his power various methods of giving relief, even when he conceals them for a time.

And all flesh shall see. He now heightens the miracle by an additional circumstance, that it will be known not only in Judea, but in foreign and distant countries; for by these words "All flesh shall see," he means that there will be no nations that do not see clearly that the return of the people is a heavenly work, and that God did not speak in vain by the Prophet. Thus he censures the unbelief of men, who never rely on the promises of God, and who treat as fables whatever is said by the prophets, till by beholding the actual fact they are constrained to yield.

That the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken. Here we are taught what is the true method of correcting our unbelief; that is, to be employed in meditating on the promises of God, and to have our faith strengthened by all the proofs of them which he exhibits. Thus it is proper to join doctrine with experience; for since the sight of God's works would produce little impression on us, he first enlightens us by the torch of his word, and next seals the truth of it by the actual accomplishment.

6. *The voice said, Cry.* He now describes a different "voice" from that of which he formerly spoke; for hitherto he had spoken about the "voice" of the prophets, but now he means the "voice" of God himself commanding the prophets to *cry*. Although the voice of the prophets is also the voice of God, whose instruments they are, (for they do not speak of themselves,) (2 Peter i. 20, 21,) yet this distinction is necessary, that we may know when the Lord commands, and when the prophets and ministers execute his commandments. There is also a beautiful comparison between the two "voices," that we may receive with as much reverence what the prophets utter as if God himself thundered from heaven; for they speak only by his mouth,

and repeat as ambassadors what he has commissioned them to declare. Besides, this preface gives notice that the Prophet is about to speak of something highly important; for, although he everywhere testifies that he faithfully delivers from hand to hand what he has received from God, yet, in order to obtain closer attention, he states that the voice of God has expressly enjoined the mode of speaking which he shall employ. Such is also the import of the word *Cry*, as if he had said that he must proclaim this commandment in a clear and loud voice, that it may make the deeper impression.

And I said, What shall I cry? The addition of this question has great weight; for the Prophet means that he does not break forth at random, and boast of what he appeared to have heard in a confused manner; but that he received clear and undoubted instruction, after having waited for it with composure. Besides, from the fact itself we may learn that there is nothing here that is superfluous, because two chief points of heavenly doctrine were to be briefly handled; that, although man is smoke and vanity, and all his excellence is deceitful and fading, yet believers have the best reason for glorying, because they seek salvation not from themselves; and that, although they are strangers on the earth, (Heb. xi. 13,) yet they possess heavenly happiness, because God unites himself to them by his word; for by renouncing ourselves we are led to desire the grace of God. The Prophet knew, indeed, what he ought to say; but by this question he intended to make a stronger impression on their minds, in order to shew that he and all the other servants of God are constrained by necessity to utter this sentiment, and that they cannot begin to teach in any other manner, though they should put a hundred questions and inquiries; as indeed they will gain nothing by choosing to adopt any other method.

As to the word *Cry*, I have no objection to view it as denoting both boldness and clearness; because prophets ought not to mutter in an obscure manner, but to pronounce their message with a distinct voice, and to utter boldly and with open mouth whatever they have been commanded to

declare. Let every one, therefore, who is called to this office constantly remember and believe, that he ought to meet difficulties of every sort with unshaken boldness, such as was always manifested both by prophets and by apostles. "Wo to me," says Paul, "if I do not preach the gospel; for necessity is laid on me." (1 Cor. ix. 16.)

All flesh is grass. First, it ought to be observed, that he does not speak merely of the frailty of human life, but extends the discourse farther, so as to reduce to nothing all the excellence which men think that they possess. David indeed compares this life to grass, (Ps. ciii. 15,) because it is fading and transitory; but the context shews that the Prophet does not speak only of the outward man, but includes the gifts of the mind, of which men are exceedingly proud, such as prudence, courage, acuteness, judgment, skill in the transactions of business, in which they think that they excel other animals; and this is more fully expressed by that which immediately follows—

All the grace of it. Some translate חסדו (*chăsdō*) "his glory;" others, "his kindness;" but I have preferred the word "grace," by which I mean everything that procures honour and esteem to men. Yet a passive signification may also be admitted; as if the Prophet had said, that all that is excellent and worthy of applause among men is the absolute kindness of God. Thus David calls God "the God of his kindness," (Ps. lix. 10, 17,) because he acknowledges him to be the author of all blessings, and ascribes it to his grace that he has obtained them so largely and abundantly. It is indeed certain that חסד (*chĕsĕd*) here denotes all that is naturally most highly valued among men, and that the Prophet condemns it for vanity, because there is an implied contrast between the ordinary nature of mankind and the grace of regeneration.

Some commentators refer this to the Assyrians, as if the Prophet, by extenuating their power and wealth, and industry and exertions, or rather by treating these as they had no existence, freed the minds of the Jews from terror. They bring out the meaning in this manner, "If you are terrified at the strength of men, remember that they are flesh, which

quickly gives way through its own weakness. But their error is soon afterwards refuted by the context, in which the Prophet expressly applies it to the Jews themselves. We ought carefully to observe that man, with his faculties, on account of which he is accustomed to value himself so highly, is wholly compared to *a flower*. All men are fully convinced of the frailty of human life, and on this subject heathen writers have argued at great length; but it is far more difficult to root out the confidence which men entertain through a false opinion of their wisdom; for, if they imagine that they have either knowledge or industry beyond others, they think that they have a right to glory in them. But he shews that in man there is nothing so excellent as not to fade quickly and perish.

As the flower of the field. The Prophet seems, as if in mockery, to add a sort of correction; for *a flower* is something more than *grass*. It is, therefore, an acknowledgment, that, although men have some shining qualities, like flowers in the fields, yet the beauty and lustre quickly vanish and pass away, so that it is useless for them to flatter or applaud themselves on account of this idle and deceitful splendour.

7. *The grass is withered.* This might be understood to relate to the beauty of the fields, which is spoiled by a single gust of wind, as it is said, (Ps. ciii. 16,) "As soon as the wind passeth over it, it is gone;" for we know that the wind is called "the Spirit of God" in other passages. But I am more inclined to think that the metaphor is adapted to the present subject; for otherwise the application of it would be somewhat obscure. The Prophet therefore explains what object he has in view, by saying that men, with all their glory, are nothing else than grass; that is, because *the Spirit of God* will quickly carry them away by a single breath.

Because the Spirit of Jehovah hath blown upon it. The meaning may be thus explained, "However illustrious are the gifts with which men are endowed, yet as soon as the Spirit of God shall blow upon them, they shall feel that they are nothing." For the false confidence with which they intoxicate themselves springs from this source, that they do not appear before God, but, in order to indulge freely in

flattering themselves, creep into places of concealment. That they may no longer deceive themselves by a foolish delight in falsehood, the Prophet drags them into the presence of God, and admits that apparently they flourish, when they have been withdrawn from God; but as soon as the Lord has breathed upon them, all their strength and beauty perish and decay.

But it may be thought that he assigns to "the Spirit of God" an office which is greatly at variance with his nature; for it belongs to him "to renew by his power the face of the earth." (Ps. civ. 30.) On the other hand, if the Lord withdraw his Spirit, all is reduced to nothing. Here Isaiah asserts what is exceedingly different, and appears to contradict David. But there is no absurdity in saying that all things are renewed by the power of the Spirit, and again, that what formerly appeared to be something is reduced to nothing; for we are nothing but in God, and, in order that we may begin to be something in him, we must first be convinced, and made thoroughly to know, that we are vanity. Therefore does the Lord breathe upon us, that we may know that of ourselves we are nothing.

Surely the people is grass. The Prophet added this, that all might know that he was not speaking of foreigners, but of that people which gloried in the name of God; for the Jews might have thought that they were more excellent, and held a higher rank than other men, and that on this account they ought to be exempted from the common lot. He therefore addresses them expressly and by name, that they may not claim anything for themselves above others; as if he had said, that they would act wisely if, through a conviction of their poverty, they should cast away all confidence in themselves. In a word, the Prophet, after having mentioned consolation, shews in what way men must be prepared to receive it; for they are not capable of it till they have formerly been reduced to nothing. Our hardness must therefore be softened, our haughtiness must be cast down and laid low, our boasting must be put to shame, and our hearts must be subdued and humbled, if we wish to receive with any advantage the consolations which the prophets bring to us by the command of God.

8. *The grass withereth.* This repetition is again added for the purpose of bringing to nought the glory of the flesh, but at the same time contains within itself a highly valuable consolation, that God, when he has cast down his people, immediately raises up and restores them. The context therefore runs thus: "The grass indeed withereth and perisheth, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." After having learned how empty and destitute we are of all blessings, how transitory and fading is the glory of the flesh, the only consolation left for us, that we may be raised up by the word of the Lord, as by an outstretched hand, is, that we are frail and fading, but that the word of the Lord is durable and eternal, and, in a word, that the life which we need is offered to us from another quarter.

But the word of our God shall stand for ever. This passage comprehends the whole Gospel in few words; for it consists of an acknowledgment of our misery, poverty, and emptiness, that, being sincerely humbled, we may fly to God, by whom alone we shall be perfectly restored. Let not men therefore faint or be discouraged by the knowledge of their nakedness and emptiness; for the eternal word is exhibited to them by which they may be abundantly supported and upheld. We are likewise taught that we ought not to seek consolation from any other source than from eternity, which ought not to be sought anywhere else than in God; since nothing that is firm or durable will be found on the earth. Nothing is more foolish than to rest satisfied with the present state, which we see to be fleeting; and every man is mistaken who hopes to be able to obtain perfect happiness till he has ascended to God, whom the Scripture calls eternal, in order that we may know that life flows to us from him; and indeed he adopts us to be his children on this condition, to make us partakers of his immortality.

But this would be of no avail, if the manner of seeking him were not pointed out; and therefore he exhibits *the word*, from which we must not in any respect turn aside; for if we make the smallest departure from it, we shall be involved in strange labyrinths, and shall find no way of extricating ourselves. Now, the word is called eternal, not

merely in itself, but in us; and this ought to be particularly observed, because otherwise we could obtain no consolation. And thus Peter, a faithful expounder of this passage, applies it to us, when he says that "we are regenerated by this incorruptible seed, that is," says he, "by the word which is preached." (1 Pet. i. 23, 25.) Hence we infer, what I mentioned a little before, that life is prepared for the dead who shall come thirsting to the fountain that is exhibited to them; for the power which is hid in God is revealed to us by the word.

9. *Ascend on the high mountain.* He proceeds with the same subject; for the Lord, having formerly promised that he would give prophets who should soothe the grief and fear of the people by promises, now commands that this consolation shall be more widely spread; because it is his pleasure to diffuse his grace throughout the whole of Judea.

Lift up thy voice aloud, O Jerusalem. Formerly he had given to *Jerusalem* and *Zion* the hope of this joyful message; now he commands that the same voice shall be spread and shall be heard through other cities, and, for this reason, gives orders that the loud voice shall be lifted up, and proclaimed from a lofty place. Although by the words "Zion" and "Jerusalem" he means the same thing, yet the repetition is emphatic; for he shews that one city excels all other cities, for no other reason than because God hath chosen it to be his sanctuary.

That bringest tidings. He gives to the city this appellation, because there the priests and Levites were instructed according to the injunctions of the Law, that they might be the teachers of the whole people, and by their labours might spread the doctrine of salvation. (Mal. ii. 7.) Yet we ought carefully to observe this commendation which God bestows on his Church, that it may not be without a clear mark of distinction; for an assembly in which the preaching of heavenly doctrine is not heard does not deserve to be reckoned a Church. In this sense also, Paul calls it (1 Tim. iii. 15) "the pillar and foundation of the truth;" for although God might have governed us by himself, and without the agency of men, yet he has assigned this office to his Church,

and has committed to it the invaluable treasure of his Word. For the same reason it will be called in another passage, "the mother of all believers." (Isaiah liv. 1; Gal. iv. 26.) Hence it follows that nothing is more absurd and wicked than for dumb idols to boast of the name of the Church, as is done in Popery.

We are likewise taught, that the Church has not been instructed by God, in order that she may keep her knowledge hidden within herself, but that she may publish what she has learned. Besides, he commands that grace shall be freely and boldly proclaimed, that prophets and teachers may not speak with timidity, as if it were a doubtful matter, but may shew that they are fully convinced of the certainty of those things which they promise, because they know well that "God, who cannot lie," (Tit. i. 2,) is the Author of them. He enjoins the witnesses of his grace to proceed from Zion, that they may fill with joy the whole of Judea.

Behold your God! This expression includes the sum of our happiness, which consists solely in the presence of God. It brings along with it an abundance of all blessings; and if we are destitute of it, we must be utterly miserable and wretched; and although blessings of every kind are richly enjoyed by us, yet if we are estranged from God, everything must tend to our destruction. From this circumstance it ought also to be remarked, that nothing is more opposite to faith than to estimate by the present appearances of things what God declares by his prophets, who at that time must have been struck dumb, had they not raised their views above the world, and thus, through the power of unshaken boldness and perseverance, dared to draw others along with them, that they might cherish good hopes when matters were at the worst. And indeed when wicked men and wickedness prevail, the greater the terror that is spread all around, and the greater the seeming wretchedness of the Church, the more ought we to extol the grace of God, and to point out his presence to believers.[1]

10. *Behold, the Lord Jehovah.* He adorns this short sen-

[1] "A ceux qui la veulent contempler en foy." "To those who wish to behold it by faith."

tence by many words, because some explanation was needed; and he again uses the word *Behold* for the sake of certainty, in order to impart greater confidence to the hearts of good men. Thus he shews more clearly how great advantage they derive from the presence of God. And first, he says, that *he will come with strength*, and that strength not unemployed, but accompanied by such an effect as we shall perceive.

And his arm shall be powerful to him.[1] לוֹ (*lō*), which we have translated *to him*, is translated by others *of himself;* or, perhaps, it will be thought preferable to translate it, "He is powerful, or reigns *for himself.*" The meaning is, that God is sufficient for himself, and does not need the assistance of any one.

Behold, his reward is with him, and his work before his face. By the repetition of the words "reward" and "work," he states more clearly what has been already expressed; for it is very customary with Hebrew writers to express the same thing in two different ways. "Reward" does not here denote what is due to merits, but the justice of God, by which he testifies that he is a rewarder to all who truly and sincerely call upon him. (Heb. xi. 6.) That this is the signification of the word שָׂכָר (*sāchār*) is known to all who are moderately acquainted with the Hebrew language. The meaning may be thus summed up: "God will not come to be beheld by us as unemployed, but to display his power, and to make us feel it;" and thus, instead of the word "work," the word "effect" would not be inapplicable. Many persons attempt an ingenious exposition of these words, and enter into childish discussion about the words "work" and "reward," as if the "work" were a merit on which a "reward" is bestowed. But nothing was farther from the view of the Prophet; for he repeats the same thing, as we have already said, and declares the result of the coming of the Lord, from which believers will derive the highest advantage.

[1] "With strong (hand), or, against the strong."—Eng. Ver. "Against the strong one, that is, against (foreign) nations to punish them."—*Jarchi.* Vitringa gives the same version, though with a different explanation, and quotes the authorities of Junius and Piscator, while he states that all the ancient interpreters, among whom he enumerates the Septuagint, Jerome, and the Chaldee Paraphrast, render the phrase *with strength.*—*Ed.*

11. *As a shepherd.* In this verse he declares what is the nature of that work of the Lord; for since he works in various and, indeed, in innumerable ways, the hearer might have been kept in suspense as to the work which God intended to accomplish; and thus the general doctrine would have been less efficacious in exciting hope. Though he does not describe every part, yet he states in a few words that God has determined to protect and guard his Church. On this account he compares him to "a shepherd;" and under this designation he expresses his infinite love towards us, when he does not refuse to stoop so low as to perform towards us the office of "a shepherd." In other passages, and even a little before, (Isaiah xxxiv. 2, &c.,) he described himself as armed with terrible power for the defence of his people, and a little after this he repeats the same statement; but here he ascribes to him a more amiable character, that believers may sweetly repose under his protection.

He will feed his flock. Now, although by the word "flock" he describes an elect people, whom he had undertaken to govern, yet we are reminded that God will be a shepherd to none but to those who, in modesty and gentleness, shall imitate the sheep and lambs. For this reason we ought to observe the character of the flock; for he does not choose to feed savage beasts, but lambs. We must therefore lay aside our fierceness, and permit ourselves to be tamed, if we wish to be gathered into the fold of which God promises that he will be the guardian.

He will carry them in his bosom. These words describe God's wonderful condescension; for not only is he actuated by a general feeling of regard to his whole flock, but, in proportion to the weakness of any one sheep, he shews his carefulness in watching, his gentleness in handling, and his patience in leading it. Here he leaves out nothing that belongs to the office of a good shepherd; for the shepherd ought to observe every sheep, so as to treat it according to its capacity; and especially they ought to be supported, if they are exceedingly weak. In a word, God will be mild, kind, gentle, and compassionate, so that he will not drive the weak harder than they are able to bear.

12. *Who hath measured?* After having spoken of God's friendly care in defending his people, he now proclaims his power, and bestows upon it all possible commendations, which, however, would produce less impression upon us, if we did not attend to the Prophet's design. At first sight, ignorant readers would think that the Prophet crowds together unfinished sentences, which would be absurd. But if we look at his object, he adorns the power of God by a seasonable and elegant discourse, which is a true support of our faith, that we may not hesitate to believe that he will do what he has promised. Not without reason does Paul say that Abraham did not hesitate, because he believed that God who had promised was able to perform what he had said. (Rom. iv. 20, 21.) In the same sense also he testifies of himself in another passage, "I know whom I have believed; God is able to keep what I have committed to him." (2 Tim. i. 12.) Such is also the import of those words of Christ, "My Father who gave you to me is greater than all." (John x. 29.) Since, therefore, we ought continually to strive against distrust, and since Satan attacks us by various contrivances, it is of great importance that the promises of God should be believed by us, to give to his power the praise which it deserves. Now, because the restoration of the people was beyond belief, it was necessary that godly minds should be raised above the world, that they might not view the grace of God as limited to human means.

We see that the Prophet does not merely teach that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, but applies to the present subject all that he relates concerning God's infinite power; and in like manner it is fitted for our guidance. When any adversity befalls us, our salvation is hidden, and, as if a cloud had come between, the power of God is concealed; we are held in astonishment, as if the Lord had forsaken and overlooked us. Let us not, therefore, think that the Prophet speaks of some ordinary matter; for if this conviction of the power of God were deeply seated in our hearts, we would not be so much alarmed, and would not be disturbed by any calamity whatever. On this power, as we have said, Abraham leaned, that he might cordially embrace what was

otherwise incredible; and, accordingly, Paul affirms (Rom. iv. 18) that "he hoped against hope;" for he believed that God was able to do what he had said, and did not waver or stagger in his mind. We are thus taught to raise our eyes above this world, that we may not judge by outward appearances, but may believe that what God hath spoken will come to pass; because all things are at his disposal.

While this conviction is necessary for all, I have said that the Jews had very great need of it; for they were pressed hard by very powerful enemies, they had no means of escape and no hope of freedom, and nothing was to be seen on every hand but a large and frightful wilderness. In vain, therefore, would consolation have been offered to them, had they not, at the suggestion of the Prophet, raised their minds to heaven, and, disregarding the appearances of things, fixed their whole heart on the power of God.

When he names "measures," which are used by men in very small matters, he accommodates himself to our ignorance; for thus does the Lord often prattle with us, and borrow comparisons from matters that are familiar to us, when he speaks of his majesty; that our ignorant and limited minds may better understand his greatness and excellence. Away, then, with all gross conceptions of God; for his greatness far exceeds all creatures, so that heaven, and earth, and sea, and all that they contain, however vast may be their extent, yet in comparison of him are nothing.

13. *Who instructed the Spirit of Jehovah?* What the Prophet had formerly taught concerning the Lord's goodness and power he now adds concerning his wisdom. And we ought to observe the connection; for, as carnal sense wickedly limits the power of God to human means, so it improperly subjects his inscrutable counsel to human reasonings. Till God be exalted above all creatures, many difficulties present themselves to interrupt the course of his works; and, therefore, if we form a judgment according to our own opinion, various scruples will immediately arise. Thus, whenever we do not see how God will do this or that, we doubt if it will take place; because what surpasses our reason appears to be impossible. Consequently, as we ought to contrast the power

of God with our weakness, so our insolence ought to be repressed by his incomparable wisdom.

By inquiring, who guided or directed the Spirit of God, he means that God had no need of a teacher, to go before and inform him about things unknown. *Spirit* here denotes reason, judgment, or understanding; for he borrows a comparison from the nature of men, that he may more fully accommodate himself to them; and I do not think that this ought to be understood as denoting the essential Spirit of God.

14. *From whom took he counsel?* The Prophet expresses the same thing in many ways; that we may know that nothing is more foolish than man,[1] when he ventures to lift himself up into heaven, to examine or judge by his own ability the works of God. In these words, therefore, Isaiah intended to repress more and more the insolence and rashness of men. Paul quotes this proof for the same purpose, to deter us from judging of the unsearchable counsel of God; for God does not wish us to inquire concerning his wisdom but in a sober and becoming manner. (Rom. xi. 34.) There is one difference, that Paul affirms that the spiritual mystery of the gospel cannot be fathomed by the human understanding, while the Prophet pronounces a commendation, in general terms, on the providence of God. But on both points we ought to learn humility, and to bring all our senses captive to obedience. All the reason or understanding that we have is mere darkness, till we have been enlightened by Christ.

15. *Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket.* If we wish to understand the Prophet's meaning, and to read these words with advantage, we must (as I remarked a little before) understand his design. He does not celebrate the greatness of God in a detached manner, but extols it with the utmost possible adaptation to the present subject, that Israelites may know that this shield alone is sufficient to protect them, and that they will have no reason to dread the efforts, or rage, or violence of the world, if God be reconciled to them, and that they may thus learn to betake themselves to God's protection; for if they were not fully convinced of this, there would arise

[1] "Que l'homme est plus beste que les bestes mesmes." "That man is more a beast than the beasts themselves."

at every moment various causes of despair. Isaiah thus continues the subject, when he says that all nations and peoples are nothing when compared with God; for, by simply breathing on them, he will scatter like *small dust* all the inhabitants of the earth. In consequence of our being excessively prone and foolishly ingenious in devising reasons of distrust, we imagine that everything that Satan does for the purpose of hindering our salvation blocks up the path of God. For the purpose of correcting this error, the Prophet declares that all the creatures are nothing before God, and that all the nations resemble small and inconsiderable drops of water. Hence we infer that nothing can be more contrary to reason than to exalt creatures for the sake of diminishing the power of God, which is high above all, and ought to be so acknowledged.

16. *And Lebanon would not be sufficient.* That is, "If we must sacrifice to God according to what he deserves, neither the whole of Lebanon, nor the beasts that graze upon it, would be sufficient for a sacrifice." By various forms of expression he dwells largely on this power of God, that men, being convinced of it, may care nothing about creatures and all their might. Yet the Prophet appears to speak expressly of the worship of God, in order to lead readers to cherish deeper reverence for him; as if he had said, "Will you dare to measure by your own judgment the power of God, whom you will not be prepared for worshipping aright, even though you should amass all the beasts and all the wood that are on Lebanon?" Hence some infer that no man can entitle himself to the favour of God by sacrifices. This, indeed, is true; but we ought, as has been already said, to consider the design of the Prophet, who, for the purpose of encouraging the Jews to cherish stronger confidence, shews that in comparison of God all things are nothing.

17. *All nations.* He repeats what he had said, that it is in the power and at the disposal of God to destroy "all nations," whenever he shall think proper; and that, even while they remain in their present condition, they are reckoned as nothing before him. But it may be thought absurd for him to say, that "the nations are nothing," since God created them, that they might be something. I reply, this is said

by comparison ; for the depravity of the human mind is such that it obscures the divine majesty, and places above it those things which ought to have been subject to God ; and, therefore, when we come to that contest, we may boldly declare that everything that is compared with God is worthless. Nor does Isaiah speak merely about the nature of men, such as it was created by God ; but his aim is to abase and restrain their pride, when they venture to exalt themselves against God. We know that we cannot subsist but in God, in whom alone, as Paul declares, "we live, and move, and are." (Acts xvii. 28.) Nothing is more vain than man ; and, as David says, "If he be laid in the balance with vanity, he will be found to be even lighter than vanity." (Ps. lxii. 9.) In the same manner does Isaiah affirm that "the nations" are not only "nothing," but "less than nothing," in order to exhibit more fully their feebleness and vanity.[1]

18. *To whom then have ye likened God ?* The Jews were in great danger from another temptation ; for there was reason to believe that the Assyrians and Babylonians would not have obtained so many victories without their assistance ; and hence they might naturally conclude, "Of what avail is it to us to have a peculiar manner of worshipping God which differs from other nations ; for our enemies fight under the favour and protection of heaven, while we are not cheered by any assistance from the God whom we worship ?" Neither can there be any doubt that the captives were taunted by unbelievers, as is evident from other passages. (Ps. cxxxvii. 3 ; Lam. ii. 15.) That true religion may not be ruined among the Jews on account of the calamity which they had sustained, God rises up, and proclaims that a grievous injury is done to him, if believers, discouraged by adversity, turn aside to the idols and superstitions of the Gentiles. Thus he confirms them in the faith of the promises, that they may not sink under the weight of the punishments which they endure.

The Prophet, as we formerly suggested, does not address merely the men of his own age, but posterity, who would

[1] The ambiguous use of the word "vanity," and of the corresponding term in the Latin language, "vanitas," is avoided by our author's version ; "and in comparison of him they are reckoned less than nothing, and what is not."— *Ed.*

have a still severer contest with the mockeries of the nations whose captives they were, and likewise with bad examples and customs; for when, in consequence of being mingled with heathen nations, they daily beheld many corruptions of piety, it was more difficult for them steadily to persevere. That they might not entertain any foolish notion that high prosperity attended the worshippers of false gods, the Prophet meets this error, and reminds them that God, whom they and their fathers worshipped, ought not to be compared with the gods of the Gentiles; for these were made by men, and were composed of gold or silver, wood or stone; but God created all things; and therefore that the highest injury is done to God, not only by comparing his majesty with things of no value, but even by not placing him far above all the angels and everything that is reckoned divine.

When Paul employs this passage (Acts xvii. 29) as a proof against idolaters, or at least quotes the words of the Prophet, he does not wrest them from their true meaning. He infers, indeed, from them that to frame any image of God is exceedingly wicked, while the Prophet, in guarding the Jews against distrust, at the same time condemns the superstitions of the Gentiles, and declares that it is inconsistent with the nature of God to be represented by painting or by any kind of likeness. This shews clearly that Paul's doctrine fully agrees with it; for the Prophet, after having shewn that the power of God is infinite, since he holds all things in his fist, at length concludes, "*To whom then will ye liken me?* for no image that is formed will have any likeness or resemblance to me."

Or what resemblance will you appoint to him? This is a useful doctrine, and worthy of observation; for were there nothing more than this single passage, it would be perfectly sufficient for refuting the inventions by which Papists deceive themselves, when they think that they have a right to represent God by outward figures. The Prophet declares that it is impossible to frame out of dead matter an image which shall have any resemblance to the glory of God. He openly rejects idols, and does not even speak of the worship of them, but affirms that to manufacture and set them up before God is wicked and abominable. The Scripture is full of

such proofs. Moses warned a people prone to this vice, "Thou sawest no image or shape in the mountain, thou only heardest a voice. See then and beware that thou be not led astray so as to frame for thyself any image." (Deut. iv. 12, 15.)

In order to know God, therefore, we must not frame a likeness of him according to our own fancy, but we must betake ourselves to the Word, in which his lively image is exhibited to us. Satisfied with that communication, let us not attempt anything else of our own. Other ways and methods, such as idols and images, teach us vanity and falsehood, and not truth, as Jeremiah beautifully says, "The wood is the instruction of vanities," (Jer. x. 8,) and Habakkuk, "His graven image is falsehood." (Hab. ii. 18.) When the Lord sometimes compares himself to a lion, a bear, a man, or other objects, this has nothing to do with images, as the Papists imagine, but by those metaphors either the kindness and mercy of God, or his wrath and displeasure, and other things of the same nature, are expressed; for God cannot reveal himself to us in any other way than by a comparison with things which we know. In short, if it were lawful to frame or set up an image of God, that would be a point of resemblance to the gods of the Gentiles, and this declaration of the Prophet could not be maintained.

19. *The carver prepares a graven image.* As public opinion has great force, and everything that pleases the multitude passes for a law, the Prophet fortifies believers against this error. These words therefore convey an anticipation, that the Jews may not be terrified when they see the Gentiles labouring with all their might to make idols, for in this way they deceive and ensnare each other. But he attacks the madness of the whole world,[1] on this ground, that all are impelled by such outrageous zeal to the practice of superstition, and every man is his own instructor in the formation of idols.

20. *The poor chooseth for his offering wood that will not rot.* He concludes that no class of men is free from that crime, that the rich and poor alike are guilty and condemned;

[1] "Il s'esleve d'une saincte colere alencontre de la folie desesperee des hommes." "He rises in holy wrath against the desperate folly of men."

for the rich make their gods of gold or silver, and the poor of wood which they had selected. Hence he shews that all men are carried away by strange madness, and that even though they have not the means, still they desire to have something excellent for the worship of their gods. Men wish to enjoy the presence of God, and this is the beginning and source of idolatry; for God is not present with us by an idol, but by his word and by the power of his Spirit; and although he holds out to us in the sacraments an image both of his grace and of spiritual blessings, yet this is done with no other intention than to lead us upwards to himself. Yet the Prophet censures the folly of men, who are so blind as to labour with excessive industry and ingenuity in highly adorning their idols.

21. *Do ye not know?* After having ridiculed the stupidity and madness of the Gentiles, the Prophet turns to the Jews; for we are all prone to superstition, and thus we easily fall into it when any example is placed before our eyes. In consequence of mixing with the Babylonians during their captivity, the Jews were constrained to behold daily the basest examples of idolatry, and might be led away to wicked imitation. Isaiah therefore anticipates this at an early period, and warns them not to be carried away by the sight of such things.

He asks, "Have they not been taught, and have they not learned who is God?" The greater part of commentators think that all the questions here put are a repetition of the same truth, namely, that the creation of the world shews clearly that nothing can be more inconsistent than to seek God in wood and stone, silver and gold. But we may infer from the context that there are two clauses. Had he proceeded in his expostulation with the Gentiles, he would have brought forward no other witnesses than heaven and earth. But because he addresses the Jews who had been plainly taught by the Law, he brings forward direct arguments to refute them, drawn both from the order of nature and from the voice of God. And, first, he puts the question in general terms, "Do ye not know?" Next, he adds two methods by which they ought to have distinguished between the true

God and the false gods. The former is drawn from the hearing of the Word, and therefore he expressly says, "Hath it not been told you? Have ye not heard?"

The latter method is borrowed from that magnificent theatre[1] in which the glory of God shines above and below. If the discourse had been addressed to foreigners and heathens, he would have been satisfied with this second demonstration, as we see that Paul also was; for, having to do with the inhabitants of Lystra, to whom no knowledge of heavenly doctrine had been conveyed, he employs none but natural arguments, that "God, by giving rain and sunshine, did not leave himself (ἀμάρτυρον) without witness." (Acts xiv. 17.) But when the Prophet spoke to the Jews about true godliness, it would have been improper for him to pass by the Law, which rendered them doubly inexcusable if, by neglecting it, they profaned themselves with unbelievers; for they had been convinced not only by the sight of their eyes, but also by the hearing of their ears, which God beat incessantly by the preaching of his Law. Since, therefore, from their mother's womb they had sucked along with the milk the true knowledge of God, and had been taught by their fathers through a long succession of generations, the Prophet justly argues that they will be exceedingly ungrateful and wicked, if such assistance produce no good effect upon them.

Hath it not been told you from the beginning? The phrase, *from the beginning*, or "long ago," conveys the idea that not only had they been educated from childhood in the pure worship of God, but during a succession of ages there had been largely enjoyed by that nation a doctrine which would not suffer them to go astray, provided that they were attentive; as if he had said, "Ye have not any new God, but the same God who revealed himself from the beginning to Abraham, Moses, and the rest of the fathers." And indeed it yields no small confirmation, that the doctrine which had been continued among believers during so many ages must have been ancient. Not that antiquity alone is sufficient for

[1] "De ce beau theatre du monde." "From that beautiful theatre of the world."

establishing the certainty of faith, (for, on the contrary, the Gentiles might easily have objected, that their superstitions were not less ancient,) but since " from the beginning" the authority of the Law had been abundantly ratified, and God had testified that it came from him, long experience added no small confirmation, when they knew that their ancestors had delivered to posterity a form of religion which they could not throw away without receiving the stamp of base apostasy. Such a commencement, therefore, and such progress quickly remove all doubt. It is one and the same faith that has been held by us and by our fathers, for they and we have acknowledged the same God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The same word, the same promises, and the same end, have been exhibited to all believers.

From the foundations of the earth. This is figurative language, in which a part is taken for the whole; for a part of the world is put for the whole world. God has exhibited this world as a mirror to men, that by beholding it they may acknowledge his majesty, so that it is a lively image of invisible things, as Paul explains at great length in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Their ignorance is therefore " without excuse;" for they cannot allege that they do not know God who has revealed himself in so many ways. (Rom. i. 20.) And indeed men sin more through insolence and pride than through ignorance; for they despise God who manifests himself openly and speaks plainly, and their attention is occupied with creatures, and with the most trifling matters. Has such contempt any title to be excused? Do they not deserve to be blinded, and to adore their own inventions instead of God, which we see has happened to almost all? Such punishment is unquestionably just and due to so great pride. And if to that knowledge which we obtain through the creatures there be likewise added the doctrine of the word, we are much less excusable. Isaiah has therefore joined both kinds of knowledge, in order to shew that the Jews ought to be doubly condemned, if they did not place confidence in God, after having received instruction concerning his power and goodness.

22. *It is he that sitteth.* He pursues the same subject,

though in a different manner, and extols the glory and power of God. Why he does so we have already in some measure explained. It is because we are so prone to distrust, that the very smallest occasion makes us waver; and therefore the Prophet is constrained to repeat the same thing in many ways, that he may keep our weak and inconstant hearts in the exercise of confidence in God. Formerly he spoke of the creation of the world, but now he comes to the continual government of it; for God did not only for a single moment exert his power for creating the world, but he manifests his power not less efficaciously in preserving it. And this is worthy of observation; for our minds would be little impressed by knowing that God is the creator of the world, if his hand were not continually stretched out for upholding it in existence. By the word *sitteth* the Prophet means, that the earth does not remain firmly and permanently in its place any further than as it is upheld by the power of God; for "sitting" is a metaphorical term which denotes "government."

The inhabitants of which are as locusts. By comparing the inhabitants of the earth to *locusts,* he reminds us that God cannot be confined within such narrow boundaries, because "even the heavens (1 Kings viii. 27) do not contain him;" that we may learn, whenever we mention God, to conceive nothing earthly or human as belonging to his incomprehensible glory. Besides, this metaphor shews how ridiculous is the blindness of men when they claim anything for themselves; for they gain by their boastings just as much as if some small creatures, such as locusts, would elevate themselves by leaping; but they must immediately fall back on the earth.

Spreadeth it out as a tent. David also employs the same form of expression, (Psalm civ. 2,) and both speak of the aspect and spreading out of the heavens with respect to us; for they do not mean that God spreads out the heavens, that he may dwell in them, but rather that there may be given to us a place of habitation under them; for while the earth sustains, the heavens cover us, so that we have a dwelling close and covered on all sides.

But it may be thought that these metaphors detract greatly

from the dignity of the subject of which the Prophet discourses, while his object is to commend and exalt it to the utmost of his power. What is a *curtain?* What is a *tent?* I reply, these metaphors tend nevertheless to exalt the subject; for it is as if he had said, "that it is as easy for God to spread out heaven, as for a man to spread out a curtain." And he leaves to every person to consider how great is the difference between heaven and a curtain, and what is their size, which any person may easily understand. Lastly, there is an implied contrast between tabernacles or houses,[1] which men are long, and laboriously, and at great expense employed in building, and yet which hardly rise to a hundred feet, and the immeasurable height of the heavens spread out by an instantaneous act of the will of God, which makes abundantly manifest how great and how excellent a workman he is.

23. *He bringeth the mighty to nothing.* He proceeds in extolling the providence of God, by which he governs the whole world, but more especially mankind. Already and but a little ago he had begun to remark that God did not create the world, so as afterwards to allow it to be governed by chance, but that he undertakes the preservation of it, and keeps it under his power and authority; but as he deigns to look more closely at mankind, so the Prophet selects this department, that by means of it he may extol God's providence. The sum of what he says is, that God's government extends far and wide, so that he directs and governs everything according to his pleasure; but he shews, (what was also highly advantageous to be known,) that even in the life of men striking proofs of the immediate exercise of the power of God are visible, and, not even satisfied with the general doctrine, he brings forward one class which ought still more to arouse our attention.

The governors of the earth as if they were not.[2] Anything that happens to the undistinguished mass of common people is despised and passed by as unworthy of being observed;

[1] Les maisons.

[2] "He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity."—Eng. Ver. "The judges (or rulers) of the earth like emptiness (or desolation) he has made." —*Alexander.*

but when kingdoms and monarchies, or men of high rank, fall from their elevation, it seems as if the earth had been shaken; and the Prophet skilfully avails himself of such proofs to arouse us. It might, indeed, be supposed that princes and magistrates are exempted from the common lot, and are not subject to the ordinary miseries of men; for by their splendour they dazzle the eyes and understandings of all men. But their lustre is entirely dimmed; and therefore the Prophet especially mentions them, and declares that the Lord "bringeth them to nothing." And if the hand of God is so powerful against nobles and princes, what must we think of the common people? Will he not also treat the ordinary crowd according to his pleasure, and drive them wherever he thinks fit? Will he not either give or take away from them, whenever he pleases, both strength and courage?

24. *It is as if they had not been planted.* Though the particle אַף (*ăph*) signifies *also*, yet in this passage it may be more appropriately rendered "so that;" and thus the plain meaning will be, "So that you may say that they were not planted or sown." It is an amplification of what he had formerly said, for he shews that the princes are totally destroyed and rooted out, so that no trace of them is left, any more than if they had never existed. So long as they remain in prosperity, they appear to be so strong as to be beyond the possibility of being thrown down by any adverse event;[1] but such changes happen as blot out their name and remembrance, so that you would say that they had never existed; and we see that this has happened not only to men but even to very flourishing kingdoms.

Since, therefore, great downfalls are so many tokens of God's dreadful power, let us learn not to lean on earthly and deceitful supports, but, whatever may be the amount of our riches or strength, let us depend on him. God does not, as heathen men babble, turn about this world like a ball, as if he took pleasure in this game; but whenever any person is highly elevated, he never ceases from insolent boasting till he is thrown down headlong, so that the judgments of God

[1] "Que le vent d'adversité ne les puisse abattre." "That the wind of adversity cannot throw them down."

are always manifest. We are also reminded by it, that it is wrong to ascribe to fortune or to any other cause the various events that happen; for God was not an instantaneous Creator, that would immediately abandon the charge of his work, but incessantly applies his hand, so that nothing is done but by his will and pleasure. Seeing that various changes thus happen in the world, seeing that those things which were thought to be firm and stable are transitory and fading, let us turn our minds to that supreme providence of God.

Even while he bloweth on them. Hence he shews how light and trivial before God are those things which commonly dazzle our eyes and fill us with amazement; for we cannot think of any great king without being perfectly alarmed and stupified. But he shews that kings and princes are like stubble before God, by whose breath they are driven, as by a whirlwind, at any instant that he pleases. We are therefore taught that we ought never to be overwhelmed by the sight of any creature, so as not to render to God the honour and glory that are due to him. This ought to have been carefully considered by the Jews, who would have thought that that monarchy of the Babylonians, whose captives they were, would never be destroyed, and that they could not be rescued out of their hands, if they had not called to remembrance this doctrine, that nothing in this world is so durable that it may not be dissolved by the breath of God. That they may not despair of their salvation, the Prophet reminds them that God, as soon as he shall be pleased to thunder from heaven, will crush all that strength in their enemies that terrifies them, so that it shall vanish away.

25. *And to whom will ye liken me?* He repeats the former statement, (verse 18,) by which he said that the Lord would not suffer himself to be likened to idols; that the Jews might not in any degree detract from his power, on account of their having been so long held captive in the hand of unbelievers, or think that idols are anything on account of the prosperity of their worshippers, whom they were compelled to serve; for, by reasoning in this manner about the power of the true God and of idols, they would have compared him with idols. On this account he repeats, as it were

in indignation, "To whom will ye liken me?" as if he had said, "Will you rob me of my majesty by your comparisons?" For although men have various thoughts of God, and transform him according to their fancy, yet he continues to be like himself, for he does not change his nature on account of the inventions of men.

Saith the Holy One. He appropriately applies to God the term *Holy*, by which title he indirectly blames or accuses the Jews of base ingratitude, if, as they have been set apart by him, they do not sanctify him in return. No holiness will be found in the gods of the Gentiles; they are the mere inventions of men. A grievous injury therefore is done to God, and he is basely degraded from his rank, when idols are brought into collision with him, and when it becomes a subject of debate if they can do more than God himself.

26. *Lift up your eyes on high.* The Prophet appears to linger too long on this subject, more especially because it presents no obscurity; for he repeats by many statements what is acknowledged by all, that God's wonderful power and wisdom may be known from the beautiful order of the world. But we ought to observe what I have already said, that we are so wicked and ungrateful judges of the divine power, that we often imagine God to be inferior to some feeble man. We are more terrified frequently by the empty mask of a single man[1] than we are strengthened by all the promises of God. Not in vain, therefore, does the Prophet repeat that God is defrauded of his honour, if his power do not lead us to warm admiration of him; nor does he spend his labour in what is superfluous, for we are so dull and sluggish that we need to be continually aroused and excited.

Men see every day the heavens and the stars; but who is there that thinks about their Author? By nature men are formed in such a manner as to make it evident that they were born to contemplate the heavens, and thus to learn their Author; for while God formed other animals to look downwards for pasture, he made man alone erect, and bade him look at what may be regarded as his own habitation.

[1] "L'apparence d'un ver de terre." "The appearance of a worm of the earth."

This is also described beautifully by a poet:[1] "While other animals look downwards towards the earth, he gave to man a lofty face, and bade him look at heaven, and lift up his countenance erect towards the stars."[2] The Prophet therefore points out the wickedness of men who do not acknowledge what is openly placed before their eyes concerning God, but, like cattle, fix their snout in the earth; for, whenever we raise our eyes upwards, with any degree of attention, it is impossible for our senses not to be struck with the majesty of God.

And see who hath created them. By mentioning the stars, he states more clearly that the wonderful order which shines brightly in the face of the heavens preaches loudly that there is one God and Creator of the world; and all who shall observe, that amidst the vast number and variety of the stars, so regular an order and course is so well maintained, will be constrained to make this acknowledgment. For it is not by chance that each of the stars has had its place assigned to it, nor is it at random that they advance uniformly with so great rapidity, and amidst numerous windings move straight forwards, so that they do not deviate a hairbreadth from the path which God has marked out for them. Thus does their wonderful arrangement shew that God is the Author and worker, so that men cannot open their eyes without being constrained to behold the majesty of God in his works.

Bringing out by number their army. Under the word *army* he includes two things; their almost infinite number, and their admirable arrangement; for a small number of

[1] "Par un poete profane." "By a heathen poet."

[2] "Pronaque quum spectent animalia cætera terram,
Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque videre
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus."

Some readers will, perhaps, thank me for a translation of the above passage into French rhyme, taken from the French version of this Commentary. —*Ed.*

"Et neantmoins que tout autre animal
Iette toujours son regard principal
En contre bas, Dieu à l'homme a donné
La face haute, et luy a ordonné
De regarder l'excellence des cieux,
Et d'eslever aux estoilles ses yeux."

persons do not constitute an army, and not even a considerable number, if there be not also numerous companies. Besides, it is not called an "army," when men are collected together at random, and without any selection, and in a confused manner, or when they wander about in a disorderly state, but where there are various classes of officers, who have the charge of ten, or a hundred, or a thousand men,[1] and where the ranks are drawn up and arranged on a fixed plan. Thus the wonderful arrangement of the stars, and their certain courses, may justly be called an "army."

By the word *number* he means that God always has this "army" at his command. In an army the soldiers may wander, and may not be immediately collected or brought back to their ranks by the general, though the trumpet sound. But it is otherwise with God. He always has his soldiers in readiness, and that "by number;" that is, he keeps a reckoning of them, so that not one of them is absent.

He will call to all of them by name. The same expression occurs, (Psalm cxlvii. 4,) and in the same sense. Some explain it to mean that God knows the number of the stars, which is unknown to us. But David and Isaiah meant a different thing, that is, that God makes use of the stars according to his pleasure; as if one should command a servant, calling him to him by name; and the same thing will afterwards be said of Cyrus, whose labours and service the Lord employed in delivering his people. (Isaiah xlv. 1.) In a word, it denotes the utmost submission and obedience, when he who is called instantly answers to his name.

By the greatness of his strength. Those who explain the preceding clause to mean that the Lord knows the number of the stars, are also mistaken in supposing that by giving them their names is meant their power and office. Others explain it, that there is not a star that has not its own power and energy, because the Lord gave to them those qualities they would always possess. But others connect these words with יִקְרָא, (*yĭkrā*,) "he shall call;" as if he had said, "The

[1] "Mais celle où il y aura des sergens de bande, capitaines, colonels et autres conducteurs." "But where there shall be serjeants of companies, captains, colonels, and other officers."

Lord is so powerful that all the stars listen to his commands." But a meaning which appears to me to be more appropriate is, that God is so powerful, that, as soon as he has issued an order, all the armies of the stars are ready to yield obedience. In this we have an extraordinary proof of his power, when those highly excellent creatures unhesitatingly submit to him, and by executing his orders testify that they acknowledge him to be their Author.

Not one shall be wanting. The word אִישׁ (*īsh*) is applied by Hebrew writers not only to men and women, but also to other animals, and even to inanimate objects, as in a former passage, (Isaiah xxxiv. 16,) when, speaking of the birds that should occupy those splendid abodes, he said that "*not one* should be wanting," he used the word אִישׁ (*īsh*).[1] These words commend to us the power of God, that we may know that there is nothing in heaven or in earth that does not depend on his will and pleasure. Nothing, therefore, can be more shameful or unreasonable than to compare him to idols, which are as worthless as anything can possibly be.[2]

27. *Why wilt thou say?* The Prophet now expostulates either with the Jews, because they were almost overcome by despair, and did not look to the promises of God, by which they ought to have supported their minds; or he makes provision for posterity, that they may not sink under any distresses however long continued. The verbs are in the future sense, which might also be explained by the subjunctive mood, *Why wouldst thou say?* For Isaiah justly infers from the preceding statement, that the chosen people, whatever may happen, ought to wait patiently for God, till he give assistance in due time. He argues from the less to the greater: "Since God keeps every part of the world under his authority, it is impossible that he shall forsake his Church." Yet it is probable that at that time there were heard among the people complaints, by which they murmured against God, as if he did not care about their sal-

[1] In the passage referred to, although not אִישׁ (*īsh*) but the feminine form אִשָּׁה (*ĭshshāh*) is used, this does not invalidate our author's argument.—*Ed.*

[2] "Qui sont plus vaines que la vanité mesme." "Which are more vain than vanity itself."

vation, or were slow in rendering assistance, or even shut his eyes and did not see their distresses. The fault which is now corrected is, that they thought that God did not care about them; as usually happens in afflictions, in which we think that God has forsaken us, and exposed us for a prey, and that he takes no concern about the affairs of this world.[1]

O Jacob and Israel! By these names he calls to their remembrance the Lord's covenant, which had been ratified by promises so numerous and so diversified; as if he had said, "Dost thou not think that thou art that people which God hath chosen peculiarly for himself? Why dost thou imagine that he who cannot deceive does not attend to thy cause?"

My way is hidden from Jehovah. He employs the word *way* for "condition" and "cause," and *hidden* for "disregarded" or "unknown;" for if God delay his assistance for a short time, we think that his care does not extend to us. Some explain it differently, that is, that the people are here reproved for thinking that they would not be punished for sinning, and they think that this sentiment resembles such as, "The wicked man hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm xiv. 1.) But the Prophet's meaning unquestionably was, "Thinkest thou, O Israel, that the Lord taketh no concern about thine affairs?" For he exclaims against the distrust of the people, and chides them sharply, that he may afterwards comfort them, and may shew that the Lord will continually assist his people whom he hath undertaken to defend.

And my judgment passeth away from my God. The word *judgment* confirms our interpretation of the preceding clause; for "judgment" is implored in affliction, when we are unjustly oppressed, or when any one does us wrong; and God is said to favour and undertake "judgment," or "our right," when, after having known our cause, he defends and guards us; and he is said to *pass by it*, when he overlooks us, and permits us to be devoured by our enemies. It is as if he had said, that the Jews act unjustly in complaining that God has disregarded their cause and forsaken them; and by that

[1] "Et qu'il ne se soucie des choses de ce monde."

reproof he prepares them for receiving consolation, for they could not receive it while their minds were occupied with wicked or foolish thoughts. It was therefore necessary first to remove obstructions, and to open up the way for consolation.

28. *Hast thou not known?* He repeats the same statement which he had formerly made, that the people who had been carefully taught in the school of God were inexcusable for their slothfulness, and chides them sharply for not having profited more by the doctrine of the Law, and by the other means which God had bestowed in addition to that knowledge which they possessed in common with the Gentiles. The word *know*, which is more general, is put first; because by many miracles and other proofs God had manifested his glory. Next, he asks, *Hast thou not heard?* As if he had said, "If thou hast profited nothing by being taught by actions and by word that God is never unemployed, it is evident that thou art excessively unteachable."

That Jehovah is the God of eternity. The Prophet calls him "eternal," and thus distinguishes him from all idols, which endure but for a time, and were made by men; and truly, if this were deeply seated in our hearts, there would no longer be any room for distrust; for if God is eternal, he never changes or decays, eternity being uniformly attended by this quality, that it is never liable to change, but always remains the same. Since the Jews did not sufficiently believe these things, though they had often "heard" them, the Prophet intended to arouse them by this reproof, in order to shew that they will be doubly guilty before God, if, after having been taught both by his numerous benefits, and by the word, they do not render the honour and glory which are due to him.

And is not wearied by weariness, and there is no searching of his understanding. Here the Prophet makes two statements; first, that God is not wearied in doing good; and, secondly, that no man can explore his wisdom. In the former clause he shews that nothing will hinder God from continuing to exercise his kindness; for he is not like men whose resources are exhausted by giving frequently, or who are

wearied by continually bestowing new favours, or who repent of their generosity. His kindness is never exhausted; if he was kind to the fathers, he will be not less kind and bountiful to posterity. As to the allegation, that God very often acts differently from what we think to be best for us, the Prophet meets it by saying that his purpose is incomprehensible, and warns us that we ought not to murmur, though he does not all at once comply with our wishes; because nothing is better adapted to cherish our hope than this sobriety, which leads us to consider how marvellously God works in preserving us, and thus to submit to his secret counsel.

29. *He giveth power to the faint.* The Prophet now applies to the present subject the general statements which he made; for we have said that his intention was to give warmer encouragement to the people, and to lead them to cherish better hope. Because the Jews were at that time weakened and destitute of all strength, he shews that on this account it belongs to God to give assistance to those who were thus exhausted and weakened. He therefore magnifies the power of God on this ground, that they may conclude and believe that they ought not to doubt of their salvation so long as they enjoy his favour. It was indeed to the people who were held captive in Babylon that the Prophet looked; but we ought also to apply this doctrine to ourselves, that whenever our strength shall fail, and we shall be almost laid low, we may call to remembrance that the Lord stretches out his hand "to the faint," who are sinking through the want of all help. But first, we must feel our faintness and poverty, that the saying of Paul, "The power of God is made perfect in our weakness," (2 Cor. xii. 9,) may be fulfilled; for if our hearts are not deeply moved by a conviction of our weakness, we cannot receive seasonable assistance from God.

30. *The youths are wearied and faint.* By this comparison the Prophet illustrates more powerfully what he had formerly said, that the strength which God imparts to his elect is invincible and unwearied; for men's strength easily fails, but God's strength never fails. It is indeed certain that all the vigour which naturally dwells in us proceeds from God; but since men claim as their own what God has be-

stowed generally on all, the Prophet thus distinguishes between the strength of men which appears to be born with them, and that strength by which God peculiarly supports his elect; for God's kindness, which is diffused throughout all nature, is not sufficiently perceived. And thus by "men's strength" he means that which is generally possessed by mankind, and by "God's assistance," he means that by which he peculiarly assists us after our strength has failed; for the Prophet speaks of the grace of God which is commonly called supernatural, and says that it is perpetual, while men can have nothing in themselves but what is fading and transitory; that by this mark he may distinguish between the Church of God and the rest of the world, and between spiritual grace and earthly prosperity.

And the young men by falling fall. In the former clause he made use of the word נערים, (*nĕgnārīm,*) *youths,* but now he adds בחרים, (*bāchūrīm,*) which means not only that they were "young men," but also that they had been selected.[1] The repetition of the same statement may be supposed to refer particularly to age, though he means that they were persons of the choicest vigour and in the prime of life. With this design he recommends that excellent privilege which God bestows on his children in preference to other men; that they may be satisfied with their lot, and may bear no envy to earthly men,[2] for that strength of which they boast. In a word, he shews that men are greatly deceived if they are puffed up by confidence in their own strength, for they immediately sink and faint.

He appears to allude to what happens every day, that the stronger any person is, the more boldly does he attempt what is exceedingly difficult, and the consequence is, that they who are naturally more robust seldom live to be old men. They think nothing too hard or difficult, they attempt everything, and rashly encounter all dangers; but they give way in the middle of their course, and suffer the punishment of their rashness. The same thing befalls those who are proud of any gift which God has bestowed on them, and are full of

[1] "Men in full vigour, *picked men,* in military language."—*Stock.*
[2] "Aux enfans de ce monde." "To the children of this world."

confidence in themselves; for all that they have received from God is reduced to nothing, or rather turns to their ruin and destruction; and thus they are justly punished for their insolence.

31. *But they that wait for Jehovah.* Hebrew writers employ the phrase, "exchanging strength,"[1] to denote "gathering new strength," and thus "being restored." The Prophet therefore shews, that godly persons, who shall hope in God, will not be deficient in strength; and he confirms what he formerly said, "In rest and silence shall be your strength." (Isaiah xxx. 15.) We must not become agitated, or throw ourselves forward rashly, but "wait" patiently. In this passage, therefore, *waiting* means nothing else than patience. Violent men dash themselves to pieces by their own eagerness, but the vigour of godly men, though it has less display, and often appears to lie buried while they calmly "wait for" God's assistance, is refreshed and renewed. We must therefore return to the saying of Paul, that "the power of God is made perfect in our weakness." (2 Cor. xii. 9.) We must therefore be fully convinced of our weakness, that we may yield to the power of God. The Jews, who were oppressed by that cruel captivity, had great need of this doctrine; but for us also, during this wretchedly ruinous condition of the Church, it is exceedingly needful.

They shall raise their wings as eagles. It is generally believed that the Prophet uses this phrase in the same sense that the Psalmist says, "Thy youth shall be renewed like that of the eagle." (Ps. ciii. 5.) It is certain that the "eagle" is very long-lived as compared with other birds. Aristotle and Pliny affirm that it never dies of old age, but of hunger; that is, that when the upper part of the beak becomes too large, it cannot take food into its mouth, and for a long time subsists entirely on what it drinks. One Zaadias, as all Jews are audacious in constructing fables, pretends that the eagle flies upward into the region that is

[1] "The phrase translated 'they shall gain new strength,' properly means 'they shall exchange strength;' but the usage of the verb determines its specific meaning to be that of changing for the better, or improving. The sense is therefore correctly given in the English Version ('they shall renew their strength')."—*Alexander.*

near the sun, and approaches the sun so closely, that its old wings are burned, and other new ones grow in their place; but this is utterly absurd and fabulous. The Prophet means that they who trust in the Lord will be vigorous, like eagles, till the most advanced old age. But seeing that eagles fly higher than other birds, by which they shew remarkable swiftness, which has also given rise to the proverb, "An eagle among the clouds," this passage may be understood to denote not only long life, but also strength and agility; so that Isaiah, after having shewn that their strength is recruited, adds that they are more vigorous, and ascend to a great height. Such is also the import of what follows,—

They shall run and shall not be weary. It is as if he had said, that the Lord will assist them, so that they shall pursue their course without any molestation. It is a figurative expression, by which he intimates that believers[1] will always be ready to perform their duty with cheerfulness. But it will be said, "There are so many troubles which we must endure in this life; how then does he say that we shall be exempt from weariness?" I reply, believers are indeed distressed and wearied, but they are at length delivered from their distresses, and feel that they have been restored by the power of God; for it happens to them according to the saying of Paul, "While we are troubled on every side, we are not overwhelmed; we are perplexed, but are not in despair; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken; we are cast down, but are not destroyed." (2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.) Let us therefore learn to flee to the Lord, who, after we have encountered many storms, will at length conduct us to the harbour; for he who hath opened up a path, and hath commanded us to advance in that course in which he hath placed us, does not intend to assist us only for a single day, and to forsake us in the middle of our course, (Philip. i. 6,) but will conduct us to the goal.

[1] Les fideles.

CHAPTER XLI.

1. Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew *their* strength: let them come near, then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.

2. Who raised up the righteous *man* from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made *him* rule over kings? he gave *them* as the dust to his sword, *and* as driven stubble to his bow.

3. He pursued them, *and* passed safely; *even* by the way *that* he had not gone with his feet.

4. Who hath wrought and done *it*, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I *am* he.

5. The isles saw *it*, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.

6. They helped every one his neighbour; and *every one* said to his brother, Be of good courage.

7. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, *and* he that smoothed *with* the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It *is* ready for the sodering: and he fastened it with nails, *that* it should not be moved.

8. But thou, Israel, *art* my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

9. *Thou* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou *art* my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

10. Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

11. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

1. Tacete mihi insulæ; et colligant populi vires; accedant, tunc loquentur; pariter ad judicium accedamus.

2. Quis excitavit ab oriente justitiam, vocavit eum ad pedem suum, dedit coram eo gentes, et reges subjugavit; dedit quasi pulverem gladio ejus, et quasi stipulam propulsam arcui ejus?

3. Persequutus est eos; evasit in pace, semita qua non ingressus est pes ejus.

4. Quis designavit, et fecit, vocans nationes ab initio? Ego Iehova primus, et cum novissimis ego idem.

5. Viderunt insulæ, et timuerunt; extremi fines terræ expaverunt, accesserunt, et venerunt.

6. Quisque proximo suo opem tulit, et fratri suo dixit, Sis strenuus.

7. Confortavit faber conflatorem, malleo percutiens tundentem vicissim, et dixit, Bonum hoc ad plumbaturam; firmavitque clavis, ut non moveretur.

8. At tu Israel servus meus, Iacob quem elegi, semen Abrahæ amici mei.

9. Quoniam apprehendi te ab extremitatibus terræ, ab eminentiis ejus vocavi te, ac dixi tibi, Servus meus es tu, elegi te, et non repudiavi te.

10. Ne timeas, quoniam ego tecum sum; non terrearis, quoniam ego Deus tuus sum, qui te corroboro, adhuc (*vel*, *utique*) opem tibi feram, adhuc te sustentabo dextera justitiæ meæ.

11. Ecce pudefient et erubescent omnes qui te provocant; erunt quasi in nihilum, et peribunt qui tecum litigant.

12. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, *even* them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

13. For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

15. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp thrashing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thrash the mountains, and beat *them* small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

16. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, *and* shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

17. *When* the poor and needy seek water, and *there is* none, *and* their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, *I* the God of Israel will not forsake them.

18. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

19. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, *and* the pine, and the box-tree together;

20. That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

21. Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong *reasons*, saith the King of Jacob.

22. Let them bring *them* forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they *be*, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.

23. Shew the things that are to

12. Quæres eos, nec invenies; qui contendunt tecum erunt quasi nihilum, et qui tecum belligerantur, quasi consumptio.

13. Quoniam ego Iehova Deus tuus, apprehendens dextram tuam, ac dicens tibi, Ne timeas, ego tibi opitulabor.

14. Ne timeas, vermis Iacob, mortui Israel; ego auxiliabor tibi, dicit Iehova, et redemptor (*vel*, *vindex*) tuus, Sanctus Israelis.

15. Ecce posui te in traham; ut tribula nova habens dentes, triturabis montes et comminues, et colles in pulverem rediges.

16. Ventilabis eos, et ventus tollet, et turbo sparget eos. Tu vero exultabis in Iehova, in Sancto Israel gloriaberis.

17. Egeni et pauperes quaerent aquas, quae non apparent; lingua eorum siti exarebit. Ego Iehova exaudiam eos; ego Deus Israelis non deseram eos.

18. Aperiam in editis cacuminibus flumina, et fontes in media planitie; desertum ponam in stagna aquarum, et terram vastam in scaturigines aquarum.

19. Dabo in deserto cedrum, spinum, myrtum, et pinum; ponam in solitudine abietem, ulmum, et populum simul.

20. Itaque videant, et cognoscant, cogitent, et intelligant simul, quòd manus Iehovæ fecerit hoc, et Sanctus Israelis creaverit istud.

21. Adeste causæ vestræ, dicit Iehova; afferte firmamenta vestra, dicit rex Iacob.

22. Adducant, et annuntient nobis quæ ventura sunt; priora quæ fuerunt nuntient, et apponemus cor nostrum; et sciemus novissima eorum; et quæ ventura sunt prædicate nobis.

23. Nunciate quæ futura sunt in

come hereafter, that we may know that ye *are* gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold *it* together.

24. Behold, ye *are* of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination *is he that* chooseth you.

25. I have raised up *one* from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name; and he shall come upon princes as *upon* mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.

26. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, *He is* righteous? yea, *there is* none that sheweth; yea, *there is* none that declareth; yea, *there is* none that heareth your words.

27. The first *shall say* to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.

28. For I beheld, and *there was* no man; even among them, and *there was* no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word.

29. Behold, they *are* all vanity; their works *are* nothing; their molten images *are* wind and confusion.

posterum, ut sciamus vos deos esse; quin benefacite, aut malefacite, ut enarremus, et videamus (*vel, miremur*) pariter.

24. Ecce vos estis ex nihilo, et factura vestra ex nihilo; abominationem elegit in vobis (homo.)

25. Excitavi ab aquilone, et venit; ab oriente solis vocabit in nomine meo; et veniet ad principes, quasi ad lutum, et tanquam figulus calcabit lutum.

26. Quis nuntiavit ab initio, ut cognoscamus? Jam ante, et dicemus, justus. Utique non est annuntians; utique non audire faciens; utique non audiens verba vestra.

27. Primus Sioni, Ecce, ecce ipsi; et Ierosolymæ nuntium dabo.

28. Aspexi, nec nullus erat; de istis inquisivi, et nullus erat consiliarius; interrogavi eos, nec responderunt verbum.

29. Ecce omnes vanitas, et defectus opera eorum; ventus et chaos simulachra eorum.

1. *Be silent to me,*[1] *O islands.* Though the Prophet's discourse appears to be different from the former, yet he pursues the same subject; for, in order to put the Jews to shame, he says that he would have been successful, if he had been called to plead with unbelievers and blind persons. Thus he reproves not only the sluggishness, but the stupidity of that nation, "to whom God had been so nigh" and so intimately known by his Law. (Deut. iv. 7.) Yet we need not wonder that the people, overtaken by many terrors, trembled so that they scarcely received solid consolation; for we have abundant experience how much we are alarmed by adversity, because amidst this depravity and corruption of our nature, every man labours under two diseases. In prosperity, he exalts himself extravagantly, and shakes off the restraint of humility and moderation; but, in adversity,

[1] "Devant moy." "Before me."

he either rages, or lies in a lifeless condition, and scarcely has the smallest perception of the goodness of God. We need not wonder, therefore, that the Prophet dwells so largely on this subject, and that he pursues it in many ways.

He gives the name of *islands* to the countries beyond the sea; for the Jews, having no intercourse with them, gave to all that lay beyond the sea the name of "islands;" and therefore he addresses not only the nations which were at hand, but likewise those which were more distant, and requires them "to keep silence before him." But of what nature is this silence? Isaiah describes a kind of judicial pleading which the Lord is not unwilling to enter into with all nations. He demands only that he shall be heard in his own cause, and that there shall be no confusion or disorder in the proceedings, which would be altogether at variance with a court of justice. On this account he commands the Gentiles to keep silence, that, when this has been done, he may openly plead his cause; for the order of a court of justice demands that every person shall speak in his turn; for, if all should cry aloud together, there must be strange confusion.[1]

This reminds us, that the reason why we do not think with so much reverence as we ought concerning the power and goodness and wisdom and other attributes of God, is, that we do not listen to him when he speaks. Men roar and murmur against God; some, swelling with their pride, openly despise his word; while others, through some kind of slothfulness, disregard him, and, in consequence of being buried in earthly delights, take no concern about aspiring to the heavenly kingdom. Even now we perceive with what insolence and rebellion many persons speak against God. How comes it that Papists are so obstinate and headstrong in their errors, but because they refuse to listen to God? for if they would listen to him in silence, the truth would speedily convince them. In a word, the Lord shews by these words that he will be victorious, if men listen to him attentively. He

[1] "He alludes to the method observed in courts of judicature, where silence is always commanded to prevent interruption; he calls upon the idolatrous nations to appear at the bar with him, and see if they could give so convincing proofs of the divinity of their gods as he could of his own."—*White.*

does not wish that they shall listen to him in a careless manner, as unjust and corrupt judges, having already determined what sentence they shall pronounce, are wont to do; but that they shall examine and weigh his arguments, in which they will find nothing but what is perfectly just.

It may be asked, "Does the Prophet now exhort the Gentiles to hear?" I reply, these things relate chiefly to the Jews; for it would be long before this prophecy would reach the Gentiles. But this discourse would be fitted more powerfully to remove the obstinacy of the Jews, when he shews that the Gentiles, though they were estranged from him, would speedily acknowledge his power, provided only that they chose to listen to him in silence. There is greater weight and force in these words addressed directly to the "islands" themselves than if he had spoken of them in the third person.

And let the people collect their strength. The Lord defies all the Gentiles to the contest, and in a contemptuous manner, as is commonly done by those who are more powerful, or who, relying on the goodness of their cause, have no doubt about the result. "Let them collect their strength and league against me; they will gain nothing, but I shall at length be victorious." As we commonly say, "*I disdain them,* (*Je les despite.*) Even though they bend all their strength both of mind and of body, still they shall be conquered; all I ask is, that they give me a hearing." By these words he declares that truth possesses such power that it easily puts down all falsehoods, provided that men give attention to it; and, therefore, although all men rise up to overwhelm the truth, still it will prevail. Consequently, if we are led astray from God, we must not throw the blame on others, but ought rather to accuse ourselves of not having been sufficiently attentive and diligent when he spoke to us; for falsehoods would not have power over us, nor would we be carried away by any cunning attempt of Satan to deceive us, or by the force of any attack, if we were well disposed to listen to God.

As to his assuming the character of a guilty person, in order that he may appear and plead his cause before a court of justice, it may be asked, "Who among men will be competent to judge in so hard and difficult a cause?" I reply, there

is nothing said here about choosing judges; the Lord means only, that he would be successful, if impartial judges were allowed to try this cause. He cannot submit either to men or to angels, so as to render an account to them; but, for the purpose of taking away every excuse, he declares that victory is in his power, even though he were constrained to plead his cause; and, consequently, that it is highly unreasonable to dispute among ourselves, and not to yield to him absolute obedience; that we are ungrateful and rebellious, in not listening to him, and in not considering how just are his demands. And, indeed, though nothing can be more unreasonable than for mortals to judge of God, yet it is still more shocking and monstrous, when, by our blind murmuring, we condemn him before he has been heard in his own defence.

2. *Who shall raise up righteousness from the east?* This shews plainly what is the design of the Prophet; for he intends to assure the Jews that they will be in no danger of going astray, if they choose to follow the path which he points out to them. And this is the reason why he mentions Abraham; for he might have enumerated other works of God, but selected an example appropriate to his subject; for, having been descended from Abraham, whom God had brought out of Chaldea amidst so many dangers, they ought also to have hoped that he would equally assist them; since his power was not diminished, and he is not wearied by acts of kindness.[1] Because it was difficult for captives and exiles, while they were at a great distance from their native country, to hope for a return, he exhorts them by a similar example to cherish favourable hopes. Having been scattered throughout Chaldea and the neighbouring countries, they thought that the road which led homeward was shut up against them on account of numerous obstructions. But from the same place Abraham their father had travelled into Judea. (Gen. xi. 31, and xii. 1.) Could not he who conducted one poor, solitary man, with his father, his nephew, and his wife, safe and sound amidst so many dangers, be the leader of his people in the journey? Since, therefore, God had called

[1] "Puisque sa force n'estoit point diminuee, ni sa beneficence refroidie." "Since his strength was not diminished, nor his benevolence cooled."

Abraham out of his native country, and delivered him from all distresses, this fact drawn from the family history ought to have made a deeper impression on his children, that the departure of their father Abraham might be a pledge or mirror of their future deliverance from Babylon.

When he calls Abraham *righteousness*, he does so, not for the purpose of extolling the man, but of shewing that God had assigned to him a character which belonged to the whole condition of the Church; for he was not called as a private individual, but the demonstration of God's eternal justice which was given in his calling is common to all believers; as if he had said, that in his person the Church had once been delivered, in order that he might confidently believe that his salvation and the justice of God would be alike eternal. And indeed in a single individual we behold the calling of believers, and a sort of model of the Church, and the beginning and end of our salvation. In short, Abraham may be regarded as a mirror of the justice of God, so far as it shines in the affairs of this world. This word is used for the sake of amplification, (πρὸς αὔξησιν); for to "raise up *righteousness* from the east," where everything had been corrupted and polluted by the most abominable superstitions, was an astonishing work of God. If, therefore, such a display of God's goodness and power had once been given, why ought they not to expect the same or a similar display in future?

Called him to his foot.[1] Some interpret this as meaning that Abraham, wherever he went, called on the name of the Lord; for as soon as he came into any country, he erected an altar to God, that he might offer sacrifice upon it. (Gen. xii. 7, and xiii. 18.) This is indeed true, but I interpret it differently, that the Lord was the leader in the journey to Abraham, who followed him step by step; for when he was commanded to depart, no particular country was pointed out to which he should go; and thus when he set out he knew not either how far, or in what direction he should travel, but God kept him in suspense till he entered into the land of Canaan. (Gen. xii. 1; Acts vii. 3.) When Abraham had

[1] "L' a-il pas appelé pour venir apres soy." "Called him to come after himself."

been called, he immediately appeared, and though he was uncertain as to his journey, he listened to the mouth of God, and was satisfied with having God for his leader. On this account the expression is appropriate, that he followed him "to his foot," because he surrendered himself to God to be a footman, like obedient and submissive servants who follow the footsteps of their master, though they are uncertain whither he is leading them.

Gave nations before him. This means that although the good man might be afflicted and tormented every moment by many anxieties, yet God removed every obstruction that could annoy him. Moses does not enumerate all the difficulties which Abraham encountered at his departure, but any person may conclude that this journey could not be free from very great annoyances; for it was impossible for him, when he set out, not to draw upon himself the hatred of the nation, and to be universally condemned as a madman for leaving his native land, and relations, and friends, and wandering to an unknown country. After having come into the land of Canaan, he had to do with wicked and cruel men, with whom he could not be agreed, because he was entirely opposed to their superstitions. What Moses relates shews plainly enough that Abraham was never at rest, and yet that wicked men durst not attempt to do anything against him; so that when he wished to purchase a sepulchre from the children of Heth, they offered it to him freely and for nothing, and acknowledged him to be a man of God and a prince. (Gen. xxiii. 6.)

And subdued kings. The Prophet illustrates the grace of God, by shewing that he did not spare even *kings*, so as to make it evident that he was a faithful protector of his servant or vassal Abraham. The history of the four kings whom he vanquished and routed is well known, (Gen. xiv. 14, 15,) and might be extended to Pharaoh, (Gen. xii. 17,) and Abimelech, (Gen. xx. 3,) who are also mentioned in Psalm cv. 14, where this subject is handled; for they were chastised because they dared to "touch the Lord's Anointed." (Psalm cv. 15.) But strictly it denotes that victory which he obtained over four kings, (Gen. xiv. 14, 15,) who had carried off his nephew Lot, with all that belonged to him; for

it is very evident from the context that the Prophet does not speak of kings or nations that had been soothed, but of armed enemies that had been violently made to pass under the yoke.

As dust to his sword. Lastly, he magnifies the ease with which that victory was gained, and thus expresses the highest contempt by comparing those kings to *dust* and *stubble;* for he subdued them without exposing himself to danger. At the same time he reminds us that this ought not to be ascribed to the power of man, but to the assistance of God; because it is not by human power that victory can be so easily gained.

3. *He pursued them.* The Prophet again commends, by the greatness of the victory, the extraordinary kindness of God. It is of the highest importance that he obtained it in a country which was unknown to him; for it is difficult and hazardous to pursue enemies in unknown countries; and how great is the value of a knowledge of places is plainly shewn by history, and daily experienced by those who carry on war. That was no obstacle to Abraham; and hence it is still more evident, that he was led and assisted by the hand of God to conduct his followers courageously.

4. *Who hath appointed?* Although Isaiah has exhibited in this passage nothing more than the example of Abraham, yet he undoubtedly intended to remind the people of all the benefits which the fathers had received in ancient times; as if he had said, "Call to remembrance what is your origin, whence I raised up your father Abraham, by what path I led him; and yet this was not the termination of my favours, for since that time I have never ceased to enrich you with every kind of blessings." When he asks therefore who he is, he does not speak merely of a single performance, but adds other benefits, which followed at various times, and which the people ought also to remember.

Calling the nations from the beginning. This must relate to the constant succession of ages. In the Hebrew language דור (*dōr*) means not only "an age," or the duration of human life, but the men who lived at that time. Thus one generation is distinguished from another, as fathers from their children, and grandchildren from their grandfathers; for posterity will call us the former generation, and will call our

ancestors a generation more remote and ancient. Again, because any one age would consume mankind, if it were not renewed by offspring, the Prophet shews that God multiplies men by an uninterrupted course, so that they succeed each other. Hence it follows, that he presides over all ages, that we may not think that this world is governed by chance, while the providence of God is clearly seen in the succession of ages. But because, in consequence of various changes, the world appears to revolve by blind impulse, the Prophet declares by these words that those manifold events were known "from the beginning" of the world, which amounts to this, that amidst that variety which time brings, God reigns, and accomplishes by a uniform course what he decreed from the beginning.

I Jehovah. At length he asserts more plainly that God is the author of these blessings, that Abraham conquered enemies, (Gen. xiv. 16,) that he lived among wicked men without suffering harm, that he put kings to flight, (Ps. cv. 14,) that the Lord avenged him, when Abimelech (Gen. xx. 18) and also Pharaoh (Gen. xii. 17) had violently seized his wife. Besides, he shews that it ought to be ascribed to him, that other blessings of various kinds had been bestowed on every generation; for his power had been manifested not only to the race of Abraham, but to the whole world.

Am the first, and likewise with the last. This relates not only to the eternity of essence, but to the government which he exercises on earth; as if he had said, that God does not grow old by any length of time, and never will surrender his authority; for he does not sit unemployed in heaven, but from his throne, on the contrary, he regulates the affairs of this world. But although the world put in his place an innumerable crowd of gods, yet he declares that he sustains no loss, because he will always continue to be like himself.

5. *The isles saw, and feared.* He now shews the excessive ingratitude of the world, which, after having perceived the works of God, still continued in the same blindness to which it had been formerly abandoned. A little before, he had said that he would easily gain a victory, if they would only listen to him; and now he adds, that the Gentiles knew his

power, and yet were rebellious and obstinate. The consequence is, that they are altogether inexcusable; because the majesty of God was abundantly revealed, if they had not chosen to shut their eyes of their own accord.[1] In order, therefore, to take away the excuse of ignorance even from the most distant nations, he says that they trembled at the sight of his works, and yet returned immediately to their natural dispositions, so as to be entangled by many errors and superstitions. There is an elegant allusion in the two verbs רָאוּ וַיִּירָאוּ, (*rāū vĕyirāū,*) which cannot be expressed in the Latin language; but the general meaning is, that they not only were eye-witnesses, but also were so deeply convinced, that fear was awakened in them by what they knew.

The farthest boundaries of the earth trembled. It might be objected, that the blessings which God bestowed on Abraham could not be celebrated throughout the whole world, so as to be known to foreign nations. But, as we have said, although Abraham alone was mentioned by him, yet he intended also to bring to remembrance other instances of his kindness which their fathers experienced, that these might lead them to entertain better hope; for not only did he bring Abraham out of Chaldea, but he rescued all his posterity from the bondage of Egypt, (Exod. xiii. 16,) and put them in possession of the land of Canaan. He says therefore, that the Gentiles had experience of his power when he delivered and preserved his people, that they might know that he is the only true God; for amidst so many miracles his power was clearly and manifestly displayed. In short, he declares that the Gentiles were terrified by the wonderful power of God, when he delivered his people; for wicked men, when they hear something of that power, are every day terrified and filled with amazement, because they perceive that God is their enemy.

Drew near and came. This expression, *drew near*, is interpreted by some to mean, that unbelievers observed more closely the works of God; for, when we wish to perceive anything more accurately, we approach nearer. Others refer

[1] "Afin de ne la point voir." "That they might not see it."

it to the king of Sodom," who went out to meet Abraham." (Gen. xiv. 17.) But those interpretations are unsuitable, and indeed have nothing to do with the subject.

6. *Every one brought assistance to his neighbour.* What now follows agrees well with what goes before, if you connect this verse with the last clause of the former verse, "They drew near, they were assembled, every one assisted his neighbour;" so that the meaning is, "Although the islands saw and knew my works, so that they trembled at them, yet they assembled in crowds to make a league among themselves." Why? That they might encourage each other to frame new gods, and might confirm each other more and more in their blindness. He therefore aggravates the guilt of the Gentiles by saying, that "every one assisted his neighbour;" and indeed whoever shall make careful inquiry will find that this is the source of all superstitions, that men by mutual consent darken the light brought to them from heaven. But although the Lord here expostulates with idolaters, yet he does it for the sake of the Jews, that they may not fall into the impiety of the Gentiles, or permit themselves to be turned aside from God and from sincere faith.[1] On this account he brings forward the ingratitude of the Gentiles, that the Jews may not imitate it, but may remain steadfast in the true worship of God.

And said to his neighbour, Be courageous. Here we see, as in a mirror, how great is the wickedness of men, who profit nothing by considering the works of God, and are even rendered more rebellious, and harden themselves more and more; for they choose of their own accord to be blind, and to shut their eyes against the clearest light, rather than to behold God who manifests himself before their eyes. To blindness is added rage, in consequence of which they rise up against God, and do not hesitate to wage war with him for defending their superstitions; so that this vice is not idol worship but idol madness. Isaiah describes this madness by saying, "Be bold, act courageously;" for he means that men have entered into a base conspiracy, by which they naturally encourage and inflame each other to the worship

[1] "De la droite fiance en luy." "From proper confidence in him."

of idols, and to drive away the fear of God which his power might have led them to entertain.

7. *The workmen encouraged the founder.* This verse is explained in various ways, and indeed is somewhat obscure; and even the Jewish writers are not agreed as to the meaning of the words. I see no reason why חרש (*chārāsh*) should be here understood to mean simply a carpenter, for it means any kind of workman.[1] The word מהליק, (*măhălīk*,) which means *one that strikes*, is generally rendered in the accusative case; I prefer to render it in the nominative case. פעם (*păgnăm*)[2] is generally translated *anvil*, and by others *a smaller hammer;* but as it sometimes signifies *by turns*, that interpretation appears to agree best with the context; for the Prophet means that workmen, by beating "in their turn," mutually excite each other, because by being earnestly employed in the same work, they grow warm, and each of them urges and arouses the other, to perform in the shortest time what they have undertaken. In short, he describes the rebellion and madness of idolaters, by which they excite each other to oppose God.

From this passage and from all histories it is manifest that this vice was not peculiar to a single age, and at the present day we know it by experience more than is desirable. We see how men, by mutual persuasion, urge one another to defend superstition and the worship of idols; and the more brightly the truth of God is manifested, the more obstinately do they follow an opposite course, as if they avowedly intended to carry on war with God. Since religion was restored to greater purity, idols have been multiplied

[1] "חרש (*chārāsh*) denotes any kind of *workman*, who devotes himself to his work, whatever may be the material on which he is employed. It is employed particularly to denote a 'worker in iron,' (Isa. xliv. 12,) 'a carpenter,' (Isa. xliv. 13,) 'a worker in stone,' (Exod. xxviii. 11,) and a 'worker in brass,' (1 Kings vii. 14.) צרף (*tzōrēph*) is more definite. It is the participle of the verb צרף, (*tzārăph*,) which signifies 'the melting and casting of metals;' and hence צרף (*tzōrēph*) is one who melts metals in the fire, purifies them from dross, separates one metal from another, and prepares them by the hammer. (Isa. xli. 7, and xlvi. 6.)"—*Rosenmüller.*

[2] "'Him that striketh by turns with him.' פעם (*păgnăm*) is not here a noun substantive, signifying *an anvil*, as it has been generally understood, but an adverb, denoting that reciprocal action of two smiths on the same anvil, of which Virgil speaks. Æn. viii. 452."—*Stocks.*

and set up in hostility to it in many places; pilgrimages, masses, unlawful vows, and, in some cases, anniversaries, have been more numerously attended than before. During that ancient ignorance there was some kind of moderation; but now idolaters, as if they had been seized by madness, run about, and are driven by blind impulse. There is nothing which they do not attempt in order to prop up a falling superstition and tottering idols. In a word, they join hands, and render mutual aid, in order to resist God. And if any person wish to throw back the blame on his brother, he will gain nothing; for it adheres to every one in such a manner that it cannot in any way be removed. All are devoted to falsehood, and almost avowedly devise methods of imposture, and, trusting to their great numbers, each of them places himself and others above God. They excite each other to the worship of idols, and burn with such madness of desire that nearly the whole world is kindled by it.

8. *But thou, Israel, art my servant.* He now shews how unreasonable it is to confound the people of Israel with the heathen nations, though all have lifted up a standard and agree in error, and though the whole world be abandoned to impostures; for, since by a calling of free grace God had chosen and set them apart, they ought not to have given themselves up to the same rage. This is a remarkable passage, and teaches us that we ought to be satisfied with our calling, so as to be restrained from the pollution of this world. Though corruptions abound, and though we indulge freely in every kind of iniquity, yet we ought to be restrained by this consideration, that we are God's elect, and therefore we are not at liberty to go beyond bounds like Gentiles, and ungodly men. "Such were some of you," says Paul, "but now you have been washed, now you have been sanctified by the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Indeed, nothing is more unreasonable than that we should wander like blind men in darkness, when the sun of righteousness hath shined upon us. We ought therefore to consider our calling, that we may follow it with all zeal and industry, and, "walking as becomes the children of light," (Eph. v. 8,) may shun that manner of life to which we

were formerly habituated. For this reason he calls Israel his *servant;* not that the Israelites deserved anything on account of their obedience, but because he had set them apart for himself; and accordingly, for the same reason he adds—

Jacob, whom I have chosen. This is a remarkable commendation of undeserved favour; as if he had said, "You are indeed my servants, not through your own merit, but through my bounty; for by my election I have prepared and formed you to be my peculiar people." In short, he reminds them that it was not by their own industry that they obtained the honour of being called God's *servants*, and that they did not differ from others so as to excel them in any respect, but that it was because it so pleased God, who has a right to select this or that person according to his pleasure. Yet at the same time he explains what is the design of our election, namely, that we may serve God. "He hath chosen us," as Paul says, "that we may be holy and unreprovable before him." (Eph. i. 4.) The object to be gained by election is, that they who were the slaves of Satan may submit and devote themselves unreservedly to God.

The seed of Abraham. This is added in the third place, in order to inform us that election depends on the promise of God; not that the promise goes before the election, which is from eternity, but because the Lord has bestowed his kindness from a regard to the promise; for he said to Abraham, "I am thy God and the God of thy seed." (Gen. xvii. 7.) This favour has therefore been continued to posterity, and on account of the promise the Lord took peculiar care of that people, as Paul also declares that "to them belonged the testament, the promise, and the giving of the Law." (Rom. ix. 4.) Hence also they were called "that holy nation," (Exod. xix. 6,) "God's sacred inheritance, and a priestly kingdom." (1 Peter ii. 9.)

My friend. It was an extraordinary honour which the Lord bestowed on Abraham, when he called him his *friend.* To be called "the servant of God" is high and honourable; for if it be reckoned a distinguished favour to be admitted into the family of a king or a prince, how much more highly should we esteem it, when God accounts us as his servants

and members of his family? But, not satisfied with that, he bestows on him even a higher honour, and adorns him with the name of "friend." What is here said about Abraham relates to all believers; and Christ declared more plainly, "Now I call you not servants, but ye are my friends; for servants know not their Lord's will, but to you have been revealed secret and divine mysteries, and hence you may know my friendly and kind disposition towards you." (John xv. 15.) Having therefore obtained from God so great an honour, we ought to remember our duty, that the more abundantly he has testified his kindness towards us, we may the more earnestly and with deeper reverence worship him continually. But we ought always to remember that Abraham was God's friend on no other ground than that of adoption; as Moses also says that the Jews enjoyed their high rank merely through the good pleasure of God, "because God loved their fathers." (Deut. iv. 37, and vii. 6-8.)

9. *For I have taken thee from the end of the earth.* Isaiah continues the same subject; for we know by experience how necessary it is that consolations be repeated when adversity presses upon us; so that it is not wonderful that the Prophet dwells so largely on this subject. But from one person, Abraham, he passes to the whole nation, mentioning the benefits which all of them have received from God. The relative אשר (*asher*)[1] appears to me to be here put for an illative particle; for he assigns the reason why the people ought to be courageous amidst adversity. It is because they have formerly experienced his kindness, and consequently ought to cherish equally favourable expectations for the future. "The ends of the earth" may be understood in two ways; either that the people were brought from a distant country, of which Abraham was a native, or that God, who embraces within his dominion the utmost boundaries of the world, deigned to stretch forth his hand to none but a single people.

From its eminences have I called thee. אצילים (*ătzīlīm*) has been generally translated "*eminences.*" Others prefer to take it in the masculine gender, as meaning "princes" or

[1] That is, instead of the usual and natural rendering, "*whom* I have taken," CALVIN renders the clause, "*because* I have taken thee."—*Ed.*

" nobles," in a sense not very different from the other; for the Prophet extols the grace of God, because, passing by very illustrious nations, he has adopted to himself a mean and obscure people. Others refer it to the kingdom of Egypt, from which the Jews were brought out; for we know how great was the renown of that people, and how far superior to other nations they reckoned themselves to be in learning, antiquity, nobility, and many other accomplishments.

But I interpret it differently; for I refer it to the election of the people, who were chosen out of the midst of other nations far superior to them; and therefore I consider מ (*mem*) to mean " from," or " more than," so that there is a comparison between the Jews and other nations. In like manner also, Moses shews that they were not elected, " because they were more or better than other nations, (for they were far fewer,) but because the Lord loved them, and determined to keep the covenant which he had sworn to their fathers." (Deut. vii. 7, 8.) Again, he says, " Not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thy heart, dost thou come to possess the land." (Deut. ix. 5.) Thus, while they were far less than other nations, still they were elected; and this shews the greatness of the love of God, and that there was no reason why, after having received blessings so numerous and so great, they should afterwards distrust so kind a Father. Besides, he adds, that a proof of this favour was given to the people in the Law; as if he had said that it was not hidden, but, on the contrary, was engraven on public tables, when God made a covenant with them by giving them the Law; for God did not wish that they whom he had taken to be his own people should wander hither and thither, but bound them to himself by a promise of salvation.

And have not cast thee off. This last expression might be thought superfluous, and even unseasonable, if Jewish writers had not frequently employed this form of speech, which is very emphatic; for it denotes the firmness of election, as if he had said, " After having once adopted thee, I did not desert or forsake thee, though I had various occasions for casting thee off." So great had been the ingratitude

of the Jews, that he might justly have rejected them if he had not resolved to continue to be like himself.

What is said about them relates also to us ; for the saying of Paul holds good, that " the gifts of God are without repentance." (Rom. xi. 29.) Though he cut off the greatest part of men on account of their unbelief, yet he reserves some seed of adoption, that the calling may continue in some furrows ; for the wickedness of men cannot change the election of God. Let us therefore remember that we have been elected by God on this condition, that we shall continue in his family, though we might justly have been abandoned.

10. *Fear not.* The former doctrine having had for its aim that the people should rely on God, the Prophet concludes from the numerous blessings by which the Lord manifested his love, that the people ought not to be afraid. And we ought carefully to observe the reason which he assigns—

For I am with thee. This is a solid foundation of confidence, and if it be fixed in our minds, we shall be able to stand firm and unshaken against temptations of every kind. In like manner, when we think that God is absent, or doubt whether or not he will be willing to assist us, we are agitated by fear, and tossed about amidst many storms of distrust. But if we stand firm on this foundation, we shall not be overwhelmed by any assaults or tempests. And yet the Prophet does not mean that believers stand so boldly as to be altogether free and void of all fear ; but though they are distressed in mind, and in various ways are tempted to distrust, they resist with such steadfastness as to secure the victory. By nature we are timid and full of distrust, but we must correct that vice by this reflection, " God is present with us, and takes care of our salvation."

Yet I will assist thee. אַף עֲזַרְתִּיךָ (*ăph gnăzărtīchā*) is rendered by some in the past tense, " Yet I have assisted thee ;" but I render it in the future tense, " I will assist thee." I translate אַף (*ăph*) *yet*, as it is usually translated in many other passages. Yet it is not inappropriate to translate it *even*, and accordingly my readers are at liberty to make their choice. If the past tense of the verb be preferred, it will mean " moreover" or " also."

With the right hand of my righteousness. Under the word "righteousness," Scripture includes not only equity, but that fidelity which the Lord manifests in preserving his people; for he gives a display of his righteousness when he faithfully defends his people against the contrivances and various attacks of wicked men. He therefore gives the appellation of "the *right hand* of righteousness" to that by which he shews that he is faithful and just. Hence we ought to draw a remarkable consolation; for if God has determined to protect and defend his servants, we ought not to have any terror; because "God cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. ii. 13) or lay aside his righteousness.

11. *Lo, all shall be ashamed and blush.* Here the Prophet expressly promises assistance to the Jews against their enemies; for if he had merely promised safety, without making any mention of enemies, various thoughts and anxieties might have arisen in their minds. God indeed promises that we shall be saved, but yet our adversaries prevail, and treat us with the utmost scorn and cruelty; where then is that salvation which was so freely and abundantly promised? To the general promise, therefore, there is likewise added this circumstance: "Though the enemies flourish, yet they shall at length be driven back, covered with shame and disgrace." Salvation is therefore promised on this condition, that we must, in the meantime, encounter enemies and maintain various contests with them, that we may not promise to ourselves external peace, for we must incessantly carry on war.

12. *Thou shalt seek them.* That is, *if thou seek them;* for enemies are not sought, when they have been put to flight; and therefore I think that this future ought to be rendered as a subjunctive, "*If thou seek them, thou shalt not find them;* for they shall be destroyed and reduced to nothing." Here it ought to be observed that he describes two kinds of enemies, one, of those who attack us by open violence, the other, of those who attack us by words, that is, who tear us by slanders, curses, and reproaches, and who, as if they were defending a righteous cause, carry on various controversies with us, and summon us to courts of justice, and often accuse us of those crimes of which they have been guilty. But

these are the stratagems of Satan, and we need not wonder that they who are his servants imitate their lord and master. The Prophet therefore mentions armed enemies who violently fight against the Church, and next brings forward wranglers, who annoy the Church by deceit and slander, and by false pretence of justice. We need not wonder, therefore, that such accusations are directed against us, and we ought not to think it strange, if many unprincipled men in the present day sell themselves to Antichrist to slander us; for the same thing happened formerly to prophets and other servants of God.

13. *For I am Jehovah thy God.* The Prophet had already shewn where the hope of salvation ought to be placed, so as to hold out against every attack; that is, when we are convinced that God is our God, and is on our side. He now lays down the same doctrine, but in different words; and yet the repetition is not superfluous, for we know how easily this doctrine slips out of our minds, even though it be frequently repeated; and it was impossible to bestow excessive commendation on this promise, which it is so difficult to root in our hearts. Let us therefore know that we shall have a prosperous issue of all our contests, for the Lord is present with us; and whenever we are attacked by any severe contest, let us learn to look to Him; for if we hesitate and look hither and thither, we shall never enjoy peace of mind. When he calls himself *our God*, he not only mentions his power, but gives proof of his goodness, which he intends to exercise towards us; for it would not be enough to be convinced of the power of God, if we were not equally certain of his love; and even when we are terrified by the mention of his power alone, his goodness is well fitted to give us peace.

Taking hold of thy right hand, and saying to thee. He now speaks about "taking hold of the hand," and about his voice; for it is of great importance to us to believe the signs which God has given us of his love, and to connect with them the doctrine which assures us of his eternal favour. The word *saying* is therefore highly emphatic; for we must remain in suspense till the Lord speak, whose voice alone can remove fear and bring peace. If, then, we desire to have composure of mind, and to conquer the vexations which come upon us

from various quarters, we must pay close attention to his voice, so as never to withdraw our mind from it; for they who refuse to hear this voice of God, or do not hear it attentively, must be miserably tormented by continual doubt and uncertainty.

14. *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, ye dead Israel.* He appears to speak of the Jews very disrespectfully when he calls them "a worm," and afterwards "dead;" but this comparison agrees better with the distresses of the people, and is more adapted to console them than if he had called them an elect nation, a royal priesthood, a holy tree from a holy root, and adorned them with other titles of that kind. It would even have been absurd to call them by those high-sounding names while they were oppressed by the deepest wretchedness. Accordingly, by the word *worm* he may be viewed as bewailing the disgraceful condition of the people, and encouraging them to cherish better hope; for he shews that he keeps his eye upon them, though they are mean and despised. It is as if he had said, "Although thou art nobody, yet I will assist thee, and, by restoring thee to thy former freedom, will cause thee to come out of thy filth and pollution."

Some translate מתים (*mēthīm*) *men*, which does not at all agree with the context. We are therefore constrained by obvious argument to translate it *dead*, for it is an exposition of the former word by repetition, which is very customary among Jewish writers. On this account I agree with Jerome, who translates it in that manner, and attaches no importance to the circumstance that the first syllable of מתים (*mēthīm*) is here written with Scheva (:) instead of Tzere (··); for points so closely allied might easily have been interchanged.[1] The subject ought also to be considered; for nothing could be more foolish than to put "men" instead of "worms," unless perhaps it be thought preferable to render it "mortals."

[1] "As the parallelism seems to require an analogous expression of contempt in the next clause, some either read מתי (*mēthē*) (*dead men*) with Aquila (τεθνεῶτες), Theodotion (νεκροί), and Jerome (qui mortui estis in Israel), or regard מתי (*mĕthē*) as a modification of that word, denoting *mortals*. Vitringa and Hitzig gain the same end by explaining it as an ellipsis for מתי מספר, (*mĕthē mispār*,) *men of number*, that is, few men, used in Psalm cv. 12."—*Alexander*.

But, undoubtedly, God intended that this voice should be heard by persons most deeply afflicted, so as to reach even to the grave; for he promises, on the contrary, that he will be a *Redeemer* of "dead men." Besides, while the Prophet had in view his own age, he extended this doctrine to all the ages of the world. Whenever, therefore, we shall see the Church oppressed by the cruelty of wicked men, it will be our duty to bring these things to remembrance, that we may believe that the children of God, who are trodden under foot by the pride of the world, and are not only reckoned contemptible, but oppressed by every kind of cruelty and reproaches so that they are scarcely allowed to breathe, are held by God in the highest honour and esteem, so that they will soon lift up their head; and let every one of us apply this to himself, so that we may not be terrified by reproaches, nor by our wretchedness, nor by anguish, nor by death itself. Though we resemble dead men, and though all hope of salvation has been taken from us, yet the Lord will be present with us, and will at length raise up his Church even from the grave.

The Holy One of Israel. By adding these words, the Prophet again reminds believers, as he did a little before, of that covenant by which Israel had been separated to be God's sacred heritage; and thus he imparts courage, that they may not faint or give way on account of their wretched condition, when they look upon themselves as "worms" and "dead men."

15. *Lo, I have made thee.* The Prophet still speaks of the restoration of the Church, and promises that she will be so victorious over her enemies as to crush and reduce them to powder; and he declares this by a highly appropriate metaphor. The Jews, whom he addresses, were nearly crushed, but he declares that, on the contrary, they shall crush their enemies, so that, after having been delivered, they shall render to them what had been done to themselves. It was necessary that this should be added, for, if they had not regained new strength, they would always have been exposed to the unlawful passions of their enemies; and therefore they needed that God should give them strength to repel the

attacks which were made upon them. Yet Isaiah at the same time declares that they shall be executioners of the vengeance of God.

But it may be thought that in this way he inflames the Jews to be desirous of taking revenge. Now, this is quite contrary to the nature of the Spirit of God; and, while we are too much inclined to this disease, the Lord is so far from treating with forbearance these purposes of revenge, that in many passages he commands us to repress them; for he exhorts us rather to pray for our enemies, and not to take delight in their distresses and afflictions. (Matt. v. 44.) I reply, the Prophet here shews what will happen, but neither commands nor exhorts us to desire the destruction of our enemies. If it be again objected that we ought not only to expect but even to desire what the Lord promises, when it tends to his glory and our salvation; I acknowledge that this consolation tends greatly to alleviate our sorrows, when he promises that he will one day inflict punishment on enemies who have cruelly distressed us, and will render to them the measure which they have meted out. (Matt. vii. 2.) Yet this is not inconsistent with the command of God, that we should be kind-hearted, and should pity them on account of the evils which they bring upon themselves, and bewail their wretched condition, instead of being led by cruel dispositions to rejoice in their destruction. (Matt. v. 44.)

If we embrace this promise with that faith which we ought to cherish, we shall bring into subjection all the violence of the flesh, and consequently shall first be disposed to endure, and afterwards with moderate zeal shall desire the judgment of God. Accordingly, it ought to be our first aim to repress and lay aside every violent emotion of the flesh, and thus to await with an honest and sincere heart the fit season of the divine judgment; and that not so much from a regard to our private advantage as that due praise may be given to the justice of God. To the same purpose David wrote—"The righteous shall rejoice when they shall see the vengeance; they shall wash their feet in the blood of wicked men." (Psalm lviii. 10.) Not that they delight in their distresses, but because, as he afterwards adds, the righteous man re-

ceives his reward, and the righteous judgments of God are made known in the earth when the wicked are punished for their transgressions.

The Jews, being by nature cruel and eager of bloodshed, seize on these promises after the manner of wild and savage beasts, which eagerly devour the prey that is offered to them, and, as soon as they smell it, are mad with rage. But the Lord does not wish his people to forget that kindness which he recommends above all things; for we cannot be his, if we are not guided by the same spirit, that is, by the spirit of mildness and gentleness. In a word, by this metaphor of "a harrow having teeth," he means nothing else than the wretched destruction of the wicked, whom the Lord will put to flight by the hand of the godly; and that for the purpose of comforting the godly, and not of inflaming them with eagerness for shedding blood.

16. *Thou shalt winnow them.* The meaning is the same as in the former verse, but by a different metaphor; for he compares the Church to a sieve, and wicked men to the chaff which is driven away by the sieve and scattered in every direction. As if he had said, "Though for a time the Gentiles bruise and winnow you, yet a severer judgment awaits them; for by their destruction they shall be bruised and driven away like chaff." But we ought to observe the difference, because here believers are bruised for their good, for they suffer themselves to be subdued and placed under the authority of God; while others, who obstinately resist and do not suffer themselves to be brought into subjection, are scattered by the wind like chaff or stubble, as the Prophet tells us. Thus God had struck them with his flails, had bruised and trodden them, had winnowed and tossed them about, in order that, when the wheat had been well cleansed, he might gather them to himself; but the heathen nations he assigns as chaff to the dunghill.

To this is added, that the victorious Church bruises some unbelievers, so that, being purified from their pollution, they obtain a place in God's barn; and thus was this prediction fulfilled, whenever by the agency of believers some of the Gentiles were subdued, so as to yield obedience to the autho-

rity of Christ; for they were never invested with any earthly power, so as to rule over all his enemies, but on the contrary they found it necessary to "possess their souls in patience." (Luke xxi. 19.) But the Lord raised them up like palm-trees bent down by so many burdens, so that they not only were safe and sound, but also, with unshaken firmness of mind, trod their enemies under their feet.

It ought also to be observed, that Scripture is frequently accustomed to apply to the Church what strictly belongs to God alone. Since, therefore, God afflicted the ungodly Gentiles for the sake of his Church, he is said to have given them to be trodden under the feet of believers, who reaped the advantage. Whenever we read those prophecies, our minds ought to be raised to the kingdom of Christ, that, free from every wicked disposition, we may observe becoming moderation, and may not desire that this bruising should take place before the proper time; for it ought to be abundantly sufficient for us, if our Head shall at length prostrate his enemies under his feet, that we may share in the triumph of his victory.

But thou shalt rejoice in Jehovah. When he adds that the Jews will have cause to rejoice in the Lord, though by this confidence he intends to alleviate their grief, yet at the same time he admonishes the godly to be modest, that they may not exult with fierceness of mind, if at any time it happen that they are raised up by the hand of God, and exalted in such a manner as to reduce their enemies under their power; for there is nothing to which men are more prone than to become proud and insolent when everything happens to their wish. They forget that they are men, and blot out the remembrance of God, whom they ought to have acknowledged as the author of all blessings. In order, therefore, to restrain that immoderate exultation in which the flesh always indulges, and by which we often suffer ourselves to be carried away, the Prophet adds, "in the Lord," because on him all our glory and all our joy ought to rest. In a word, the Prophet exhorts to gratitude, that, the more highly God exalts us, the more carefully ought we to repress all the vanity of ambition, and rejoice and glory in him alone.

17. *The needy and poor shall seek water.* Here he follows out the subject which he had begun to handle at the beginning of the fortieth chapter; for he describes the wretched and afflicted condition in which the Jews should be in Babylon, till at length God should have compassion on them and render assistance. He therefore prepares them for enduring extreme poverty, by saying that they will be *thirsty;* for this figure of speech, by which a part is taken for the whole, is better adapted to express the severity of the affliction. We know that nothing gives men greater distress than the want of water when they are "thirsty."

I Jehovah will listen to them. God declares that he will relieve them, when they are brought to this necessitous condition; and hence we ought to learn to whom this promise belongs, namely, to those who, having been reduced to extremity, are as it were parched with thirst and almost fainting. Hence also we see that the Church does not always possess an abundance of all blessings, but sometimes feels the pressure of great poverty, that she may be driven by these spurs to call upon God; for we commonly fall into slothfulness, when everything moves on according to our wish. It is therefore advantageous to us to thirst and hunger, that we may learn to flee to the Lord with our whole heart. In a word, we need to be deeply affected with a conviction of our poverty, that we may feel the Lord's assistance. The Prophet unquestionably intended, by this circumstance, partly to illustrate the greatness of the favour, and partly to advise the people not to lose heart on account of their poverty.

The needy and poor. We ought to observe the names by which the Prophet here denominates the people of God. When he calls them "afflicted and poor," he does not speak of strangers, but of those whom the Lord had adopted and chosen to be his heritage, and whom he forewarns that they must patiently endure some severe hardships. Hence we ought not to wonder if the Lord sometimes permit us almost to languish through hunger and thirst, since he dealt not less severely with our fathers.

When he says that waters *are nowhere to be seen,* let us

learn that the Lord, in order to try our patience and faith, withdraws from us every assistance, that we may lean on him alone. Thus, when we look around on every side, and see no relief, let us know that still the Lord will assist. By the expression, *I will listen*, he means that God does not assist every kind of persons, but those who pray to him; for if we are so slothful as to disregard his aid, it is right that we should be altogether deprived of it, and, on account of our unworthiness, should feel no alleviation.

18 and 19. *I will open rivers.* He illustrates the former doctrine in a different manner, namely, that God has no need of outward and natural means for aiding his Church, but has at his command secret and wonderful methods, by which he can relieve their necessities, contrary to all hope and outward appearance. When no means of relief are seen, we quickly fall into despair, and scarcely venture to entertain any hope, but so far as outward aids are presented to our eyes. Deprived of these, we cannot rest on the Lord. But the Prophet states that at that time especially they ought to trust, because at that time the Lord has more abundant opportunities of displaying his power, when men perceive no ways or methods, and everything appears to be utterly desperate. Contrary, then, to the hope and belief of all men, the Lord will assist his people, that we may not suffer ourselves to be driven hither and thither by doubt and hesitation.

On lofty mountain tops. In order to confirm his statement more fully, he promises that he will perform miracles contrary to the nature and order of things, that we may not imagine that we should think and judge of these things according to human capacity, or limit the power and promises of God to these inferior means.[1] The Lord has sufficient power in himself, and needs not to borrow from any other, and is not confined to the order of nature, which he can easily change, whenever he thinks fit; for when he says that he will make waters to flow *on the tops of mountains, and fountains in valleys, and pools in deserts*, we know that all this is contrary to the order of nature. The reason why he promised these things is abundantly evident. It was

[1] "Aux causes secondes." "To second causes."

that the Jews might not think that they were prevented from returning to Judea by that vast desert in which travellers are scorched by the heat of the sun, and deprived of all the necessaries of life. The Lord therefore promises that he will supply them with water, and with everything else that is necessary for the journey. Now, these things were fulfilled when the Lord brought his people out of Babylon, but much more abundantly when he converted the whole world to himself by Christ the Redeemer, from whom flow in great abundance throughout the whole world waters to quench the thirst of poor sinners.[1] At that time such a change took place as could never have entered into the imaginations of men.

20. *Therefore let them see and know.* While God leads us by all his works to adore him, yet when the restoration of his Church is the matter in question, his wonderful power is manifested, so as to constrain all to admire him. As we have seen elsewhere, and as he will afterwards repeat frequently, when he brought back his people from banishment, he gave a proof fitted for being remembered in all ages, as he declares in this passage that he will do. But because we are either sluggish or careless in considering his works, and because they quickly pass away from our view in consequence of our giving so little attention to them, he repeats the same statement in many forms. We give our attention to vain and useless matters, instead of admiring these works of God; and if at any time they excite our admiration, yet we quickly forget them, because we are speedily led aside to different and very unimportant matters. The Prophet therefore arouses us, in order to shake off our slothfulness, and to quicken and direct all our senses to understand the power of God. On this account he places in the first rank *looking*, which produces certain *knowledge*, and next adds *thought*, which more fully and abundantly confirms the knowledge.

It is uncertain whether the Prophet speaks of the Jews, who were the citizens of the Church, or of foreigners; but in my opinion we may view it as having a general meaning, that in the restoration of the Church the hand of God will be visible even to very remote Gentiles, so that all shall be

[1] "Des poures pecheurs."

constrained to admire the work of God. Yet it is certain that the Persians and Medes, after having conquered the Jews, were singularly astonished when they heard those passages from the prophets, and especially when they beheld the accomplishment of them before their eyes; for they knew that such things could not be performed by men, though they were not converted to God.

21. *Plead your cause.* There was also a necessity that this should be added to the former doctrine; for when we associate with wicked men, they pour ridicule on our hope and charge us with folly, as if we were too simple-minded and credulous. Our faith is attacked and frequently shaken by jeers such as the following, "These people hang on the clouds, and believe things that are impossible and contrary to all reason." Since, therefore, the Jews, in their captivity, would hear such mockeries, it was of importance that they should be fortified by these warnings of the Prophet; and in order to give greater weight to this address, he comes forth of his own accord, for the sake of inspiring confidence, and challenges the Gentiles themselves, charging them to bring forward everything that could support their cause, as is usually done in courts of justice.

Saith the king of Jacob. When he calls himself "the king of Jacob," he defies all idols, and shews that he undertakes the cause of his people, so as to be at length acknowledged to have vindicated his glory by delivering those who were unjustly oppressed. And yet the godly needed to possess a strong faith; for what was the aspect of the kingdom, when they were captives and so severely oppressed? This was also the reason why he formerly (verse 14) called them "the worm Jacob" and "dead men." But they comforted their hearts by that promise by which he formerly said that their root was concealed under ground, when he compared the people to a tree that had been cut down. "A branch shall spring from the stock of Jesse, and a sprout from his roots shall yield fruit." (Isaiah xi. 1.) They beheld by the eyes of faith that kingly power which lay concealed; for it could not be seen by the bodily eyes or comprehended by the human understanding.

22. *Let them bring them forth.* Not only does he attack idolaters, but he bids them bring forward the gods themselves along with them; as if he had said, "Whatever may be their ingenuity, they will not be advocates able to defend so bad a cause." Here we see God sustaining the character of an advocate, and speaking in the name of the whole nation; for he does not wish to be separated from his Church, which he therefore confirms and fortifies against the mockeries of wicked men, and other contrivances by which they attack our faith. We ought therefore to be of good cheer, when God undertakes our cause, and comes forth publicly against idolaters, and, armed with his invincible truth, rises up against the idols and puts to silence their vanity.

In this manner he shews, that by his word he has most abundantly armed his elect for certain victory, so that they ought not to hesitate to attack and join battle with all unbelievers; and indeed whoever has profited, as he ought, by heavenly doctrine, will easily repel all the tricks of Satan by steadfast and victorious faith. It is true, indeed, that our faith begins with obedience; but submissiveness, by which we place our senses in obedience to God, goes before understanding, in such a manner that it illuminates our minds by certain knowledge. And by this mark the true religion is distinguished from superstitions, for it is regulated by a rule which is not doubtful and cannot deceive. Idolaters are indeed exceedingly proud of their errors, but all their obstinacy proceeds from stupidity, madness, or fanatical violence; for if they would soberly and calmly attend to sound doctrine, that pride by which they obscure the light of truth would speedily give way.

It is far otherwise with the godly, whose faith is indeed founded on humility, but is not rashly led away by foolish and inconsiderate zeal, for it has for its guide and teacher the Spirit of God, that it may not go astray from the sure light of the word. Accordingly, when there is no rule to distinguish, as the Prophet declares, it is absolute superstition. Now, since nothing ought to be rejected at random, believers say, "Bring them forth, and we will give our heart to them;" not that they whom God has taught ought still

to be ready to turn to either side, but because superstitious persons can bring forward no argument but what is ridiculous. Again, therefore, he points out the distinction between stupid obstinacy and true faith, which has its foundation in the word of God, so that it can never fail.

And let them tell us what is to come. We must now inquire by what arguments the Prophet maintains the majesty of God; for God claims for himself Almighty power and foreknowledge of all things, in such a manner that they cannot be ascribed to another without the most shocking blasphemy. Hence it is concluded that these things are peculiar to the Godhead, so that whoever it be that knows all things and can do all things, is justly believed to be God. In this manner, therefore, the Prophet now argues, "If the idols which you worship be gods, they must know all things, and be able to do all things; but they can do nothing either in prosperity or in adversity, and they know nothing that is past or that is future; and therefore they are not gods."

Here arises a difficult question. In the writings of heathen authors we find many predictions which they received from the oracles of their gods, which might lead us to believe that Apollo, Jupiter, and others, foreknew future events, and consequently were gods. I reply, first, if we consider what was the nature of those oracles which are reported to have been uttered by idols, we shall find that they were all obscure and doubtful, like that which was given to Pyrrhus,[1]—

"Aio te Æacida Romanos vincere posse,"

or that to Crœsus,—

"Crœsus Halym penetrans magnam pervertet opum vim."[2]

By embarrassing ambiguities of this sort did Satan torture the minds of men; so as to send away in uncertainty those who were the victims of that imposture.

But we must also believe what Paul teaches, that Satan has received power of giving effect to error, that he may de-

[1] "Comme celuy qui fut donné à Pyrrhus."

[2] The former of these hexameters is perhaps the finest recorded specimen of that intentional ambiguity which the Pythian and kindred oracles so successfully cultivated. It may either mean, "I say that thou, the son of Æacus, canst conquer the Romans," or, "I say that the Romans can conquer thee, the son of Æacus."—*Ed.*

ceive all the ungodly men who willingly give themselves up to his delusions. (2 Thess. ii. 11.) Thus, when they consulted Satan, "the father of falsehood," (John viii. 44,) it was not wonderful that they should be deceived under the pretence of truth; but it was a most righteous reward of their ingratitude. We see that Satan was freely permitted to increase, by means of the false prophets, the blindness of Ahab, who took pleasure in such delusions. (1 Kings xxii. 22.) Equally just was it that heathen nations, having alienated themselves from the true God, should be caught by idle snares, and even drawn to destruction. And here it is superfluous to pursue the argument on which Augustine bestows so much toil and pains, how far the devils approach to the heavenly angels in foreknowledge; for the cause must be sought in something else than in their nature. Thus, in ancient times, by giving to wicked teachers the opportunity of practising deception, God revenged the crimes of his people, not that they excelled in the gift of understanding, but so far as they were adapted to this purpose, they freely exercised the permission which was granted to them.

So far as relates to God himself, though his foreknowledge is concealed, and is even a deep abyss, yet he plainly enough revealed it to the elect people, so as to distinguish himself from the multitude of false gods. Not that he foretold everything by his prophets; for the curiosity of men is insatiable, and it is not advantageous to them to know everything; but because he concealed nothing that is profitable to be known, and by many remarkable predictions shewed, as far as was necessary, that he takes a peculiar care of the Church; as Amos says, "Shall there be any secret that God doth not reveal to his servants the prophets?" (Amos iii. 7.) This privilege was wickedly and shamefully abused by the Jews, who universally made traffic of their trivial predictions among the Gentiles. But the truth always shone so brightly in the heavenly oracles, that all who guarded against snares clearly perceived by means of it that the God of Israel, and he alone, is God. So far were the idols from demonstrating their foreknowledge, that believers, who had been taught in the school of God, could no more be deceived by them, than

a person who had the proper use of his eyes could be made to mistake black for white at noon-day. Much less could they ascribe power to the idols, since it was evident from the predictions which were daily uttered, that God alone directs both prosperity and adversity. The Assyrian conqueror rendered thanks to his idols; but God had previously forewarned the Jews what would happen, and had even shewed plainly that he armed that wicked man for the purpose of executing his vengeance.

23. *Do good, or do evil.* It must not be supposed that *to do evil* denotes, in this passage, to commit injustice, which is contrary to the nature of God; but it means to inflict punishment, and to send adversity, which ought to be ascribed to the providence of God, and not to idols or fortune. In this sense it is very frequently found in Scripture. "Is there evil in a city which the Lord hath not done?" (Amos iii. 6.) In like manner Jeremiah accuses the people of not acknowledging God to be "the author of good and of evil." (Lam. iii. 38.) By "evils" of that kind, therefore, such as wars, pestilence, famine, poverty, disease, and others of the same kind, the Lord punishes the sins of the people, and wishes to be acknowledged as the author of them all. Now, Isaiah does not bring forward all the examples and arguments by which God could be distinguished from idols, for that would have required a very long discourse; but he is at present satisfied with those which would give a short and yet clear demonstration; for he has not yet concluded his argument.

24. *Lo, ye are of nothing.* He now mocks at idols, in order to confirm the godly in the belief and worship of one God, when by the comparison they see that those who worship idols are miserably deceived and blind.

And your work is of nothing. *Work* must here be taken in a passive sense, as if he had said that it is a vain imagination, a contrivance of no value. But it may be thought that Isaiah speaks inaccurately, when he says that idols are of nothing, for they are composed of gold, or silver, or brass, or stone, or other materials. The solution is easy, for Isaiah did not look at the material, but at the quality, that is, the notion of divinity which men erroneously attribute to them.

Superstitious people do not adore wood, or brass, or metal, viewed in themselves, but the majesty which they foolishly attach to the idol;[1] and this undoubtedly is nothing else than a vain imagination. Hence also Paul, in like manner, declares that "an idol is nothing;" for what reality can be ascribed, or what name can be given, to a mere image? (1 Cor. viii. 4.)

He hath chosen abomination in you. Some translate *abomination* in the nominative case, and suppose the meaning to be, that the men who choose the idols are abominable; but I think that the meaning is different. The verb *hath chosen*, appears to me to be used indefinitely, as the grammarians call it, and in that manner it is often used in other passages of Scripture; for when the Prophets speak of the generality of men, and relate any common or ordinary occurrence, they do not employ a substantive. I consider the meaning therefore to be, that men cannot frame idols without at the same time framing abomination. This is a remarkable passage for abhorring idols and the presumption of men who make them, which they cannot do without offering the highest insult to God. Some men think that it is amusement, but the Prophet declares it to be "abomination," which God cannot endure, and will not permit to be unpunished. The word *choose* points out, as with the finger, the origin of idol-worship; for pure religion would never have been contaminated by so many corruptions, if they had not dared to make gods for themselves according to their own caprice; and therefore it ought to be remarked, that all kinds of worship that are the result of "choice" are at variance with true godliness.

25. *I have raised him from the north.* He again returns to that argument which he had briefly handled, respecting the foreknowledge and power of God, and shews that to him alone in whom these are found, the name of God belongs; and therefore that they are empty idols, which neither know nor can do anything. When he says that he "raised him from the north," some explain this as relating to Cyrus, and others as relating to Christ. But I think that here the Pro-

[1] "A l'idole corruptible." "To the corruptible idol."

phet denotes two things; for when he says "from the north," he means the Babylonians, and when he says "from the east," he means the Medes and Persians; as if he had said, "Two changes shall happen that are worthy of remembrance; for I will raise up the Babylonians, whose empire I will exalt on high, and next shall come the Persians, who shall become their masters."

Though these events happened afterwards, and after a long interval, he shews that they were already well known to him, and appointed by his decree, so that the accomplishment of them is a clear proof of his divinity. Yet, in the former clause, he threatens punishment for the purpose of terrifying the Jews; in the latter he commends his mercy; because he testifies that both the captivity and the deliverance of the people will be his work, so that it is evident that both foreknowledge and power belong to him. Heathens make a division of various offices among their gods: Apollo foretells what is to come, Jupiter executes it, and another god does something else. But it belongs to God, not only to foretell or declare what shall happen, but to arrange everything according to his pleasure; for every divine attribute belongs to God alone, and cannot be ascribed to another; and this is the reason why he claims for himself foreknowledge and execution as inseparable.

When he says that he calls him "from the north," as I suggested a little before, he predicts the future captivity of which at that time there was no expectation, because the Jews were friends and allies of the Chaldeans, and at the same time he prophesies concerning the restoration of the people who were permitted by Cyrus to return into their native land. Who would have thought, when matters were in that state, that such things could be believed? Especially since it was after a long interval that they followed; for they happened two hundred years after having been predicted by the Prophet. The Lord testifies that he is the author of these events, that all may know that the Babylonians did not attack them by chance, but that the Lord raised them up as scourges for chastising the Jews, and that the Persians and Medes did not subdue the Babylonians by their own power,

but because they were led and prompted by the hand of God. In these words, therefore, he describes the greatness and power of God, and so much the more plainly by declaring that kings and princes, with respect to him, are clay. Hence we see more clearly that the Prophet had regard not only to his own age, but to posterity; for these things could not be known to the men who lived at that time, but posterity, who had actual experience of their accomplishment, understood them better; so that none could doubt that it is God alone "to whom all things are naked and open," (Heb. iv. 13,) and who directs everything according to his pleasure.

This is a remarkable passage for establishing the full and perfect certainty of the oracles of God; for the Jews did not forge these predictions while they were captive in Babylon, but long after the predictions had been delivered to their fathers, they at length recognised the righteous judgment of God, by whom they had been warned in due time, and then embraced his mercy, having learned that they would be at length delivered by the Lord, who wished to preserve his Church, and whom they had found to be faithful to his promises. Hence, therefore, we may conclude with certainty, that Isaiah did not speak at his own suggestion, but that his tongue was moved and guided by the Spirit of God.

And he has come.[1] When he says that "he has come," the meaning is, that all that has been foretold by the command of God will infallibly be accomplished. He speaks of a future event, and thus illustrates the foreknowledge of God; and when he says that God is the author of these events, this relates to his power and might.

He shall call on my name. To call "on the name of God" means nothing else than to undertake anything in obedience to his authority. It is true, indeed, that nothing was farther from the intention of Cyrus than to be employed in the service of the God of Israel, or to follow him as a leader; but the event shewed that God, in a secret manner, led the way, so as to conduct him by successive and incredible victories to Babylon.

And as a potter he shall tread the clay. This comparison

[1] "And he shall come."—Eng. Ver.

is added, because the power of the Babylonians was so vast that it was universally believed that it could not be assailed, and they looked upon themselves as invincible. Since therefore the Babylonians, trusting to their resources, despised all their adversaries, and were elated with pride, the Prophet says, that not only they, but many others shall be subdued and "trodden down like the clay." In short, he means that the wealth of the Babylonians shall not prevent this change from being made, or the Medes and Persians from becoming masters of the empire; and, indeed, the propriety of this metaphor was clearly proved by the event, when Cyrus, after having conquered so many nations, and gained so many brilliant victories, within a short period subdued the whole of the East.

26. *Who hath declared from the beginning?* Again the Lord attacks idols, after having maintained his divinity; for he asks if idolaters can produce anything of a similar nature to support their worship; that is, if they can bring forward any such instance of foreknowledge or power. And because beyond all controversy he could claim this prerogative for himself alone, he tauntingly says, "We will acknowledge that he by whom such things shall be done is the true God."

We will say he is righteous. This is the literal rendering, but the word "righteous" has an extensive meaning, and sometimes denotes "true and approved;" hence the saying, "Wisdom is justified," that is, approved, "by her children." (Matt. xi. 19.) These are then clear proofs of the divine majesty, which demonstrate the vanity of idols, because by the disposal of God alone all things are governed, and by the slightest expression of his will the mightiest monarchies are overthrown. The Lord speaks in the plural number, in order to shew that he does not defend his own cause, but the cause of the whole nation. He is, indeed, satisfied with his own eternity; but as we are weak, it is therefore necessary that it should be proved to us that he is God, that our minds may not go astray, or wander in uncertainty, but may rest entirely upon him; and therefore to the word is added experimental knowledge, that it may more fully support our faith, if it should still be liable to waver.

There is none that heareth your words. He says that the idols are dumb, and leave their worshippers in suspense, while he kindles the torch of his word, to enlighten his elect people, and lead them forward to righteous judgment.

27. *The first to Zion.*[1] In this verse God states more clearly that he predicts future events to the Jews, in order to encourage them to believe; because if prophecies had not their end and use, it would not in itself be of very great advantage to know future events. God therefore testifies that prophecies are intended by him to promote the faith and edification of the Church. It was necessary that this should be added to the former statements, that the people might know that those examples were exhibited, not only in order to magnify the power of God, but that all believers might reap advantage from it; for all the instances of the power and foreknowledge of God ought to be viewed by us in such a light as will enable us to know that he takes care of us, (1 Pet. v. 7,) and that he does everything for promoting our salvation. *Zion* is therefore commanded to acknowledge him as the true and only God, not merely because he has punished their crimes, but because they are restored from captivity, and thus learn that God is reconciled to them.

Behold! Behold! Here we must regard Mount Zion as desolate and uninhabited, and Jerusalem as reduced to a wilderness. Hence also Jeremiah represents Jerusalem as speaking in the manner that is usual with afflicted and distressed women. (Lam. i. 20.) Thus the Lord now exhibits her as a widow and forsaken. Isaiah will afterwards arouse her to rejoice as a woman who had formerly been barren, and to whom the Lord had given new fertility for bearing offspring. (Isaiah liv. 1.) At the same time he now declares that he will comfort Jerusalem, at a time when nothing was to be seen but what was melancholy and revolting in her hideous ruins. Now, the present message is, either that she shall give birth to children, though she was long a widow and

[1] "I, saith Jehovah, am the first that has foretold by my prophets to the Jews those things which none of the false gods, and none of their prophets could foretell, the destruction of Babylon and the return of the banished Jews into their native country."—*Rosenmüller.*

desolate, or that they who had been scattered in distant captivity will return to her in vast numbers. With that desolation, therefore, we must contrast the restoration which was effected through Cyrus, when it is said, "Behold, they come;" and by the word "first," is denoted not only the eternal essence of God, but likewise the antiquity of the prediction.

And I will send a messenger to Jerusalem. He now describes the manner in which God informs believers about future events, that is by the agency and ministry of the prophets. מבשר (*mĕbăshshĕr*) is translated by Jerome "Evangelist," or "a bringer of good tidings;" but it literally means a "messenger." This makes little difference, however, as to the meaning; for it denotes the prophets who should bring the glad and cheering message of this deliverance, as God had formerly promised by Moses, that he would raise up, in uninterrupted succession, faithful ministers who should surpass all the magicians, and soothsayers, and diviners. (Deut. xviii. 15.) For this reason also he formerly bestowed on the Church a remarkable appellation, calling her "a bearer of tidings," (Isaiah xl. 9,) because in the Church the word of God ought to sound aloud.

This tends greatly to the commendation of preaching; for the Lord does not descend from heaven to instruct us, but employs the ministry of his servants, and declares that he speaks to us by their mouth; and this distinguished blessing of God ought to be embraced with our whole heart. He had promised in the Law, as I mentioned a little before, "I will raise up to you a prophet from the midst of you." (Deut. xviii. 15.) He now confirms that promise, by saying that there shall never be wanting "messengers" to soothe the people amidst their griefs, and to comfort them amidst their severest afflictions. Hence also we ought to conclude, that there is no condition of the Church in which prophecies cease; that is, in which the word of God brings no alleviation of our distresses.

28. *I looked, and there was none.* After having spoken of himself, the Lord returns to idols; for these are continued contrasts by which a comparison is drawn between God and

idols. As if he had said, "I do these things, but idols cannot do them; they have no counsel, or wisdom, or understanding; they cannot give an answer to those that ask them, and cannot yield any alleviation to the wretched." In this comparison we ought to observe that he plainly shews himself to be God, first, by the prophets and by their doctrine, and, secondly, by his works in a similar manner; and that nothing of this kind is found in idols; from which it follows, that they are not gods, and that we ought to rely on him alone. Besides, the eyes of men are darkened by slothfulness, because they neither inquire, nor consider, nor observe. Thus they are stupified by idols, for they are willingly deceived; because they would immediately perceive the emptiness of idols, if they carefully applied their minds to examine them. This shews that idolaters cannot be excused on the plea of ignorance, for they choose to be blind and to wander in darkness, rather than to see the light and embrace the truth.

29. *Behold, they are all vanity.* After having spoken of idols, he makes the same statement as to their worshippers; as it is also said, "They who make them, and all that trust in them, are like them." (Psalm cxv. 8.) Thus he shews that all superstitious persons are full of "vanity," and have no judgment or reason. They cannot, indeed, believe this; for, inflated with pride, they look upon themselves as men of the highest ability, and despise us as stupid and ignorant of the affairs of men, when compared with themselves. With what pride do the Papists and their learned doctors scorn us! With what haughtiness did the Romans in ancient times despise the Jews! But we need not spend time on such pride, for in this passage God condemns them all for "vanity."

Their works are a failure. He gives the name of "works" both to the images which superstitious men make for themselves, and to all false worship, which has no end or measure, and in which every person desires to be a master and teacher of religion. He pronounces all of them to be a "failure," that is, of no value. He declares this still more plainly, when he says, that they are *wind and chaos*, that is, confusion;

for I explain תֹהוּ (*tōhū*) in the same sense that it has in the first chapter of Genesis, where Moses says that "the earth was at first shapeless and confused." (Gen. i. 2.)

This passage against idolaters ought to be carefully studied; for they think that images were appointed to preserve religion, and that minds are kindled by the sight of them, as by the visible presence of God. They think that they are the books of the ignorant and unlearned, who cannot be instructed by the reading of the Scriptures. But the Spirit of God here declares that it is a confused and shapeless thing, that is, because it disturbs and retains in superstition the minds of men; and indeed all true knowledge that exists among men is choked and quenched by this worship of idols. In short, he teaches that all images, and the homage that is paid to them, and they who have made and follow them, are mere vanity, and that we may safely condemn them.

CHAPTER XLII.

1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

3. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

4. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

5. Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

6. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine

1. Ecce servus meus, innitar illi, (*vel, suffulciam ipsum*) electus meus, in quo sibi placuit anima mea. Posui Spiritum meum super eum; judicium Gentibus proferet.

2. Non clamabit, neque attollet, neque audire faciet in plateis vocem suam.

3. Arundinem quassatam non perfringet, nec linum fumans extinguet; in veritate proferet judicium.

4. Non deficiet, neque frangetur, donec ponat in terra judicium; et legem ejus insulæ expectabunt.

5. Sic dicit Deus (*vel, potens*) Iehova, creator cœlorum, et expandens eos, dilatans terram, et germina ejus; dans flatum populo in ea habitanti, et spiritum ambulantibus in ea.

6. Ego Iehova vocavi te in justitia, et tenebo te manu tua; custodiam

hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

7. To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, *and* them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.

8. I *am* the Lord; that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

9. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

10. Sing unto the Lord a new song, *and* his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

11. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice*, the villages *that* Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.

12. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands.

13. The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.

14. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, *and* refrained myself: *now* will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.

15. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.

16. And I will bring the blind by a way *that* they knew not; I will lead them in paths *that* they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

17. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye *are* our gods.

te, et ponam in fœdus populi, in lucem Gentium;

7. Ut aperias oculos cæcorum, ut educas ex ergastulo vinctos, et e domo carceris sedentes in tenebris.

8. Ego Iehova; hoc nomen meum; et gloriam meam alteri non dabo, nec laudem meam sculptilibus.

9. Priora ecce venerunt, et nova ego annuntio; antequam oriantur nota faciam vobis.

10. Cantate Iehovæ canticum novum, laudem ejus ab extremo terræ; qui descenditis in mare, et plenitudo ejus, insulæ et incolæ earum.

11. Exclament desertum et urbes ejus, villæ ubi habitat Kedar; cantent incolæ petræ, et e vertice montium jubilent.

12. Dent Iehovæ gloriam, et laudem ejus in insulis annuntient.

13. Iehova tanquam gigas egredietur, et sicut præliator zelum excitabit. Vociferabitur, jubilabit; super inimicos suos roborabitur.

14. Tacui a multo tempore, silui et continui me; tanquam parturiens clamabo; vastabo, et deglutiam simul.

15. In solitudinem redigam montes et colles; omnem herbam eorum exsiccabo; ponam flumina in insulas, et stagna exsiccabo.

16. Et ducam cæcos per viam quam nesciebant; per semitas quas non noverant faciam eos ingredi; ponamque tenebras coram eis in lucem, et obliqua in planum. Hæc (*vel, Hæc verba, vel, Has res*) faciam eis, et non derelinquam eos.

17. Agentur retrorsum, pudefient pudore qui confidunt sculptili, et fusili dicunt, Vos dii nostri.

18. Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.
19. Who *is* blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger *that* I sent? who *is* blind as *he that is* perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?
20. Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.
21. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make *it* honourable.
22. But this *is* a people robbed and spoiled; *they are* all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.
23. Who among you will give ear to this? *who* will hearken, and hear for the time to come?
24. Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.
25. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid *it* not to heart.

18. O surdi, audite, et cæci, intenti estote ad videndum.
19. Quis cæcus nisi servus meus? Quis surdus sicut nuntius meus quem mitto? Quis cæcus sicut perfectus, et cæcus ut servus Iehovæ?
20. Videndo multa quæ non observas; aperiendo aures, ut non audiat.
21. Iehova voluntarius propter justitiam suam, ut magnificet legem ac extollat.

22. At hic populus direptus est ac conculcatus; illaqueandi in carceribus omnes, et in speluncis abscondentur. Erunt in direptionem, nec erit qui liberet; in prædam, nec quisquam dicet, Redde.
23. Quis in vobis auribus percipiet hoc? Quis advertet? Quis attendet in posterum?
24. Quis in prædam dedit Iacob, et Israel exposuit direptoribus? Nonne Iehova? Eo quòd peccaverimus in eum, nec voluerunt ambulare in viis ejus, nec audierunt legem ejus.
25. Itaque effudit super eum furorem iræ suæ, et robur belli. Inflammavit eum undique, neque advertit; exarsit in eum, neque posuit super cor.

1. *Behold my servant.* The Prophet appears to break off abruptly to speak of Christ, but we ought to remember what we mentioned formerly[1] in expounding another passage, (Is. vii. 14,) that the prophets, when they promise anything hard to be believed, are wont immediately afterwards to mention Christ; for in him are ratified all the promises which would otherwise have been doubtful and uncertain. "In Christ," says Paul, "is Yea and Amen." (2 Cor. i. 20.) For what intercourse can we have with God, unless the Mediator come between us? We undoubtedly are too far alienated from his majesty, and therefore could not be partakers either of salvation or of any other blessing, but through the kindness of Christ.

[1] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. i. p. 246.

Besides, when the Lord promised deliverance to the Jews, he wished to raise their minds higher, that they might look for greater and more valuable gifts than bodily freedom and a return to Judea; for those blessings were only the foretaste of that redemption which they at length obtained through Christ, and which we now enjoy. The grace of God in the return of his people would indeed have been imperfect, if he had not at that time revealed himself as the perpetual Redeemer of his Church. But, as we have already said, the end of the captivity in Babylon included the full restoration of the Church; and consequently we need not wonder if the prophets interweave that commencement of grace with the reign of Christ, for that succession of events is mentioned in many passages. We must therefore come to Christ, without whom God cannot be reconciled to us; that is, unless we be received into the number of God's children by being ingrafted into his body. It will be evident from what follows, that the Prophet now speaks of Christ as the First-born and the Head, for to no other person could the following statements be applied, and the Evangelists place the matter beyond all controversy. (Matt. xii. 17-21.)

He calls Christ his *Servant*, (κατ' ἐξοχήν,) by way of eminence; for this name belongs to all the godly, because God has adopted them on the condition of directing themselves and their whole life to obedience to him; and godly teachers, and those who hold a public office in the Church, are in a peculiar manner denominated the servants of God. But there is something still more extraordinary, on account of which this name belongs especially to Christ, for he is called a "Servant," because God the Father not only enjoined him to teach or to do some particular thing, but called him to a singular and incomparable work which has nothing in common with other works.

Though this name is ascribed to the person, yet it belongs to human nature; for since his divine nature is eternal, and since he has always possessed in it a glory equal and perfectly similar to that of the Father, it was necessary that he should assume flesh in order that he might submit to obedience. Hence also Paul says, "Though he was in the form

of God, he accounted it not robbery to make himself equal to God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant," &c. (Philip. ii. 6.) That he was a servant was a voluntary act, so that we must not think that it detracted anything from his rank. The ancient writers of the Church expressed this by the word "Dispensation," by which it was brought about, they tell us, that he was subject to all our infirmities. It was by a voluntary determination that he subjected himself to God, and subjected himself in such a manner as to become also of service to us; and yet that exceedingly low condition does not hinder him from still continuing to possess supreme majesty. Hence also the Apostle says that he was "exalted above every name." (Philip. ii. 9.) He employs the demonstrative particle *Behold,* in order to lead the Jews to regard the event as having actually taken place; for the objects which were before their eyes might have led them to despair, and therefore he bids them turn away their eyes from the actual condition of things and look to Christ.

I will lean upon him, or, *I will uphold him.*[1] אתמך (*ĕth-mŏch*) is interpreted by some in an active, and by others in a passive sense. If it be taken in a passive sense, the meaning will be, that God will "lean on" his Anointed in such a manner as to lay the whole charge upon him, as masters commonly do to their faithful servants; and it is a proof of extraordinary fidelity, that God the Father will deliver all things to him, and will put into his hand his own power and authority. (John xiii. 3, and xvii. 10.) Yet I do not object to the active signification, "I will raise him up," or, "I will exalt him," or, "I will support him in his rank;" for what immediately follows, *I will put my Spirit in him,* is a repetition of the same sentiment. In the former clause, therefore, he says, *I will uphold him,* and afterwards describes the manner of "upholding," that he will direct him by his Spirit, meaning by this phrase that he will assist Christ in all things, and will not permit him to be overcome by any difficulties. Now, it was necessary that Christ should be endued with the Spirit of God, in order to execute that divine office,

[1] The former is found in the text of our author's version, and the latter in his marginal reading.—*Ed.*

and be the Mediator between God and men; for so great a work could not be performed by human power.

My elect. In this passage the word *Elect* denotes "excellent," as in many other passages; for they who are in the very flower of their age are called chosen youths. (1 Sam. xxvi. 2, and 2 Sam. vi. 1.) Jehovah therefore calls him "an excellent servant," because he bears the message of reconciliation, and because all his actions are directed by God. At the same time he demonstrates his undeserved love, by which he embraced us all in his only-begotten Son, that in his person we may behold an illustrious display of that election by which we have been adopted into the hope of eternal life. Now, since heavenly power dwells in the human nature of Christ, when we hear him speak, let us not look at flesh and blood, but raise our minds higher, so as to know that all that he does is divine.

In whom my soul is well pleased. From this passage we learn that Christ is not only beloved by the Father, (Matt. iii. 17,) but is alone beloved and accepted by him, so that there is no way of obtaining favour from God but through the intercession of Christ. In this sense the Evangelists quote this passage, (Matt. xii. 18,) as Paul also declares that we are reconciled "in the beloved" in such a manner as to be beloved on his account. (Eph. i. 6.) The Prophet afterwards shews that Christ will be endued with the power of the Spirit, not solely on his own account, but in order to spread it far and wide.

He will exhibit judgment to the Gentiles. By the word *judgment* the Prophet means a well-regulated government, and not a sentence which is pronounced by a judge on the bench; for to *judge* means, among the Hebrew writers, "to command, to rule, to govern," and he adds that this judgment will be not only in Judea, but throughout the whole world. This promise was exceedingly new and strange; for it was only in Judea that God was known, (Ps. lxxvi. 2,) and the Gentiles were shut out from all confidence in his favour. (Eph. ii. 12.)

These clear proofs were therefore exceedingly needful for us, that we might be certain of our calling; for otherwise we

might think that these promises did not at all belong to us. Christ was sent in order to bring the whole world under the authority of God and obedience to him; and this shews that without him everything is confused and disordered. Before he comes to us, there can be no proper government amongst us; and therefore we must learn to submit to him, if we desire to be well and justly governed. Now, we ought to judge of this government from the nature of his kingdom, which is not external, but belongs to the inner man; for it consists of a good conscience and uprightness of life, not what is so reckoned before men, but what is so reckoned before God. The doctrine may be thus summed up: "Because the whole life of men has been perverted since we were corrupted in every respect by the fall of Adam, Christ came with the heavenly power of his Spirit, that he might change our disposition, and thus form us again to 'newness of life.'" (Rom. vi. 4.)

2. *He shall not cry aloud.* The Prophet shews of what nature the coming of Christ will be; that is, without pomp or splendour, such as commonly attends earthly kings, at whose arrival there are uttered various noises and loud cries, as if heaven and earth were about to mingle. But Isaiah says that Christ will come without any noise or cry; and that not only for the sake of applauding his modesty, but, first, that we may not form any earthly conception of him; secondly, that, having known his kindness by which he draws us to him, we may cheerfully hasten to meet him; and, lastly, that our faith may not languish, though his condition be mean and despicable.

He shall not lift up his voice; that is, he shall create no disturbance; as we commonly say of a quiet and peaceable man, "He makes no great noise."[1] And indeed he did not boast of himself to the people, but frequently forbade them to publish his miracles, that all might learn that his power and authority was widely different from that which kings or princes obtain, by causing themselves to be loudly spoken of in order to gain the applause of the multitude. (Matt. viii. 4; ix. 30; xii. 16; Mark v. 43; Luke viii. 56.)

[1] "Il ne fait pas grand bruit."

3. *A bruised reed he shall not break.* After having declared in general that Christ will be unlike earthly princes, he next mentions his mildness in this respect, that he will support the weak and feeble. This is what he means by the metaphor of "the bruised reed," that he does not wish to break off and altogether crush those who are half-broken, but, on the contrary, to lift up and support them, so as to maintain and strengthen all that is good in them.

Nor will he quench the smoking flax. This metaphor is of the same import with the former, and is borrowed from the wicks of lamps, which may displease us by not burning clearly or by giving out smoke, and yet we do not extinguish but trim and brighten them. Isaiah ascribes to Christ that forbearance by which he bears with our weakness, which we find to be actually fulfilled by him; for wherever any spark of piety is seen, he strengthens and kindles it, and if he were to act towards us with the utmost rigour, we should be reduced to nothing. Although men therefore totter and stumble, although they are even shaken or out of joint, yet he does not at once cast them off as utterly useless, but bears long, till he makes them stronger and more steadfast.

God gave a manifestation of this meekness when he appointed Christ to begin the discharge of his office as ambassador; for the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven in the shape of a dove, which was a token of nothing but mildness and gentleness. (Matt. iii. 16; Mark i. 10; Luke iii. 22; John i. 32.) And indeed the sign perfectly agrees with the reality; for he makes no great noise, and does not render himself an object of terror, as earthly kings commonly do, and does not wish to harass or oppress his people beyond measure, but, on the contrary, to soothe and comfort them. Not only did he act in this manner when he was manifested to the world, but this is what he daily shews himself to be by the gospel. Following this example, the ministers of the gospel, who are his deputies, ought to shew themselves to be meek, and to support the weak, and gently to lead them in the way, so as not to extinguish in them the feeblest sparks of piety, but, on the contrary, to kindle them with all their might. But

that we may not suppose that this meekness holds out encouragement to vices and corruptions, he adds—

He shall bring forth judgment in truth. Although Christ soothes and upholds the weak, yet he is very far from using the flatteries which encourage vices; and therefore we ought to correct vices without flattery, which is in the highest degree inconsistent with that meekness. We ought therefore to guard diligently against extremes; that is, we must neither crush the minds of the weak by excessive severity, nor encourage by our smooth language anything that is evil.

That we may better understand who those persons are towards whom, following the example of Christ, we ought to exercise this mildness, we ought to weigh carefully the Prophet's words. He calls them "a bruised reed" and "smoking wick." These words do not apply to those who boldly and obstinately resist, nor to those who are fierce and headstrong; for such persons do not deserve this forbearance, but rather must be broken and crushed, as by the strokes of a hammer, by the severity of the word. While he praises meekness, he at the same time shews to whom it is adapted, and at what time and in what manner it ought to be employed; for it is not suitable to hardened and rebellious persons, or to those whose rage sends forth flames, but to those who are submissive, and who cheerfully yield to the yoke of Christ.

The word *smoking* shews that he maintains and cherishes not darkness, but sparks, though feeble and hardly perceptible. Wherever then there is impiety and stubbornness, there we must act with the utmost severity, and exercise no forbearance; but, on the other hand, where there are vices that have not gone beyond endurance, yet by gentleness of this nature, instead of encouraging, we must correct and reform them; for we must always pay regard chiefly *to truth*, of which he speaks, that vices may not be concealed, and thus acquire a secret corruption, but that the weak may be gradually trained to sincerity and uprightness. These words, therefore, relate to those persons who, amidst many deficiencies, have integrity of mind, and earnestly desire to

follow true religion, or, at least, in whom we see some good beginning. It is clearly shewn by many passages (Matt. xii. 39; xxii. 18; xxiii. 13) how severely Christ deals with despisers; for he is constrained to employ "a rod of iron" to crush those who do not submit to be governed by his shepherd's crook. As he justly declares that "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light," (Matt. xi. 30,) to willing disciples, so with good reason does David arm him with "a sceptre of iron" (Ps. ii. 9) to break his enemies in pieces, and declare that he will be wet with their blood. (Ps. cx. 6, 7.)

4. *He shall not faint, nor be discouraged.* The Prophet alludes to the preceding verse, and confirms what he formerly said, that Christ will indeed be mild and gentle towards the weak, but that he will have no softness or effeminacy; for he will manfully execute the commission which he has received from the Father. This is what he means when he says that "he shall not faint;" and in this verb יכהה (*yichheh*) there is an allusion to a former verse, in which he spoke of "smoking flax." Now, he shews what is the true moderation of meekness, not to turn aside to excessive indulgence; for we ought to use it in such a manner as not to swerve from our duty. Many persons wish to profit by the name of gentleness, so as to gain the applause and esteem of the world, but at the same time betray truth in a base and shameful manner.

I remember that there were in a populous city two preachers, one of whom boldly and loudly reproved vices, while the other endeavoured to gain the favour of the people by flatteries. This fawning preacher, who was expounding the Prophet Jeremiah, lighted on a passage full of the mildest consolation, and having found, as he imagined, a fit opportunity, began to declaim against those harsh and severe reprovers who are wont to terrify men by thunderbolts of words. But on the following day, when the Prophet changed his subject and sharply rebuked wicked men with his peculiar vehemence of style, the wretched flatterer was constrained to encounter bitter scorn by retracting the words which were fresh in the recollection of all his hearers. Thus the temporary favour which he had gained speedily vanished,

when he revealed his own disposition, and made himself abhorred by the good and the bad.

We must therefore distinguish between the submissive and the obstinate, that we may not abuse that mildness by using it on every occasion. Yet Isaiah declares that Christ's fortitude will be unshaken, so that it shall surmount every obstacle; for by these words, *Till he put judgment*, he means that the ministry of Christ will be so efficacious that the fruit of his doctrine shall be manifested. He does not merely say, "Till he shall have made known the will of his Father," but "Till he establish *judgment*," that is, as we formerly said, the proper exercise of government. Christ's ministry, therefore, he testifies, will not be unfruitful, but will have such efficacy that men shall be reformed by it.

This must not be limited to the person of Christ, but extends to the whole course of the gospel; for he not only discharged the embassy committed to him for three years, but continues to discharge the same embassy every day by means of his servants. Yet we are reminded that it is impossible for us to discharge that office without being laid under the necessity of suffering many annoyances, and sustaining contests so severe and dangerous, that we shall be almost overwhelmed and ready to abandon everything. Still we must not desist, but persevere constantly in our duty, and run to the very end; and therefore the Prophet testifies that Christ will be so steadfast that he will pursue his calling to the end; and, following his example, we ought boldly to persevere.

And the isles shall wait for his law. Here he employs the word *Law* to mean "doctrine," as the Hebrew word for "law" is derived from a verb which signifies to teach;[1] and thus the prophets are accustomed to speak of the gospel, in order to shew that it will not be new or contrary to what was taught by Moses.

The isles. We have formerly shewn[2] that the Hebrew writers give the name of *isles* to countries beyond the sea.

[1] That is, תורה (*tōrāh*), "a law," is derived from ירה (*yārāh*), which in the Hiphil conjugation, הורה (*hōrāh*), signifies "he taught."—*Ed.*

[2] See page 244.

The Prophet confirms the former statement, by which it was declared that Christ had been appointed not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles, though they had nothing in common with the Jewish commonwealth. In short, that promise relates to all nations, that the advantages of this restoration and reformation may be shared by every part of the world.

By the word *wait*, he means that the elect will eagerly embrace the gospel offered to them; for the Lord displays in it the power of his election, when "they who wandered in darkness," (Matt. iv. 16,) as soon as they hear the voice of the gospel, embrace it with the utmost eagerness, and although they formerly wandered, like scattered and lost sheep, yet hear immediately the voice of the shepherd, and cheerfully submit to him, as Christ himself has also spoken. (John x. 16.) Hence we learn that the saying of Augustine is exceedingly true, "that many sheep wander out of the folds, while wolves frequently dwell within the folds." This attention is the work of God, when men who thought that they were wise give up their own judgment, and have to learn the gospel of Christ, so as to depend entirely on this teacher.

5. *Thus saith Jehovah.* He confirms what he said in the beginning of the chapter about the reign of Christ, that he will renew and restore all things; and as this might be thought to be incredible, he has here added a magnificent description of the power of God, by which our faith ought to be confirmed, especially when the outward aspect of things is directly contrary. On this account he brings forward clear proofs of the power of God, that all may be aroused by the mention of them, and may be convinced that he who created all things out of nothing, who spread out the heavens, who produced vegetation, who gave life to animals, and who upholds and defends all things by his power, will easily perform what he promises concerning the reign of Christ. These forms of expression remind us that we ought always to consider the power of God, that we may be fully convinced of the authority and undoubted certainty of his word; for it is not without reason that Isaiah makes this preface, but in order to remove every doubt, because nothing is too hard for

God, who keeps the whole world in subjection to his authority; and in the following chapters he will employ similar modes of expression.

הָאֵל (*hāēl*) is rendered by some "powerful," and by others "God;" but it is of little consequence, for the meaning is the same; because he exhibits his power and majesty, and adorns him with this variety of titles, that we may know that he will easily restore all that is fallen and laid low.

6. *I Jehovah have called thee in righteousness.* He again repeats the name of God, in which we ought to supply what he stated in the former verse about his power. It is generally thought that this points out the end of Christ's calling, that he was sent by the Father to establish "justice" among men, who are destitute of it so long as they have not Christ, and, being given up to all the corruptions of crimes and vices, are held captive under the tyranny of Satan. But because the word "righteousness" has a more extensive signification, I pass by that ingenious distinction; for it is not even said that he shall be called "to righteousness," but this phraseology ought to be viewed as equivalent to the adverbial expression, "righteously," or "in a holy manner." I rather suppose the meaning to be, that Christ was "called in righteousness," because his calling is lawful, and therefore shall be firm and secure. We know that what is not done in a proper and regular manner cannot be of long duration. Or perhaps it will be thought preferable to view it thus, that God, in appointing Christ to restore the Church, seeks no reason but from himself and his own righteousness; but it is certain that this word denotes stability, as if he had said, "faithfully."

And will hold thee by thy hand. By "the holding of the hand" he means the immediate assistance of God; as if he had said, "I will direct and establish thee in the calling to which I have appointed thee. In a word, as thy calling is righteous, so I will defend and uphold thee, as if by taking hold of thy hand I were thy leader."

I will keep thee. This word "keep" plainly shews what is the meaning of holding by the hand, namely, that Christ will be directed by the Father in such a manner that he shall

have him as his protector and guardian, shall enjoy his assistance, and, in short, shall feel his presence in all things.

And will place thee for a covenant. He now states the reason why God promises that he will be a guardian to Christ. Besides, the Prophet spoke of the Jews and the Gentiles separately; not that they differ by nature, or that the one is more excellent than the other, (for all need the grace of God, (Rom. iii. 23,) and Christ has brought salvation to all indiscriminately,) but because the Lord assigned the first rank to the Jews, (Matt. x. 6,) it was therefore proper that they should be distinguished from the others. Accordingly, before "the partition-wall" (Eph. ii. 14) was thrown down, they excelled, not by their merit, but by the favour of God, because with them in the first instance the covenant of grace was made.

It may be objected, "Why is Christ appointed to a covenant which was ratified long before? for, more than two thousand years before, God had adopted Abraham, and thus the origin of the distinction was long previous to the coming of Christ." I reply, the covenant which was made with Abraham and his posterity had its foundation in Christ; for the words of the covenant are these, "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed." (Gen. xxii. 18.) And the covenant was ratified in no other manner than in the seed of Abraham, that is, in Christ, by whose coming, though it had been previously made, it was confirmed and actually sanctioned. Hence also Paul says, "that the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ," (2 Cor. i. 20,) and in another passage calls Christ "the minister of circumcision, to fulfil the promises which were given to the fathers." (Rom. xv. 8.) Still more clearly does he declare that Christ is "the peace" of all, so that they who were formerly separated are united in him, and both they who were far off and they who were near are thus reconciled to God. (Eph. ii. 17.) Hence also it is evident that Christ was promised, not only to the Jews, but to the whole world.

For a light of the Gentiles. We have here another clear proof of the calling of the Gentiles, since he expressly states that Christ was appointed to be "a light" to them. He

calls him *a light*, because the Gentiles were plunged in the deepest and thickest darkness, at the time when the Lord illuminated none but the Jews. Now, then, the blame lies solely with ourselves, if we do not become partakers of this salvation; for he calls all men to himself, without a single exception, and gives Christ to all, that we may be illuminated by him. Let us only open our eyes, he alone will dispel the darkness, and illuminate our minds by the "light" of truth.

7. *That thou mayest open the eyes of the blind.* Here he explains more fully for what end Christ shall be sent by the Father, that we may see more clearly what advantage he yields us, and how much we need his assistance. He reminds all men of their "blindness," that they may acknowledge it, if they wish to be illuminated by Christ. In short, under these metaphors he declares what is the condition of men, till Christ shine upon them as their Redeemer; that is, that they are most wretched, empty, and destitute of all blessings, and surrounded and overwhelmed by innumerable distresses, till they are delivered by Christ.

Now, though the Prophet addresses Christ himself, yet he has in his eye believers, that they may know that in him they ought to trust, and may not doubt that a remedy will be provided for all their distresses, if they implore his aid. God does not here enjoin Christ what he shall do, as if he needed to be taught or to receive commandments; but he addresses him for our sake, that we may know why the Father sent him; as he says also, (Psalm ii. 7, 8,) "I will make known the decree; ask of me, I will give thee the Gentiles;" for in that passage the rank and authority of Christ are declared, that we may know that the Father has bestowed on him the highest authority, in order that we may more securely place all our hope and confidence in him.

8. *I am Jehovah.* Hence infer what is the nature and extent of the disease of unbelief, since the Lord can hardly satisfy himself with any words to express the cure of it. By nature we are prone to distrust, and do not believe God when he speaks, till he entirely subdue our stubbornness. Besides, we continually fall back into the same fault through our levity,

unless he employ many bridles to restrain us. Again, therefore, he returns to that confirmation of which we have spoken formerly, that his promises may remain unshaken.

This is my name. הוּא (*hū*) is sometimes taken for a substantive, so as to be a proper name of God;[1] but I explain it in a more simple manner, "*It* is my name," that is, "*Jehovah* is my own name, and cannot lawfully be given to any other." In a word, by this expression he seals all that was said about the office of Christ, and adds as it were a seal to the promise: "He who declareth these things testifieth that he alone is God, and that this name dwelleth in him alone."

And I will not give my glory to another; that is, "I will not suffer my glory to be diminished, which it would be, if I were found to be false or fickle in my promises." He therefore declares that he will abide by his promises, because he wishes to vindicate his glory and preserve it entire, that it may not be in any respect diminished.

This is a remarkable passage, by which we are taught that the glory of God is chiefly visible in his fulfilment of what he has promised. And hence we obtain a singular confirmation of our faith, that the Lord never deceives, never swerves from his promises, and nothing can hinder what he has once determined. But since Satan, by amazing arts, endeavours to obscure this glory of God, and to bestow it on men and on false gods, he therefore testifies that he will not permit himself to be regarded as fickle or deceitful in his promises.

Nor my praise to graven images. A contrast is drawn between the only God and idols with reference to time; for, had not God been the Redeemer of his people, unbelievers would have boasted as if true religion had been false and useless. God therefore declares that he will not permit wicked men to triumph by oppressing the Church; and, beyond all doubt, God has hitherto spared us, and still deals so gently with us, in order that he may not expose his Gos-

[1] "There is no sufficient ground for the opinion that the pronoun הוּא (*hū*) is ever used as a divine name, cognate and equivalent to *Jehovah*. In this case the obvious and usual construction is entirely satisfactory." —*Alexander*.

pel to the blasphemous reproaches of the Papists. We ought to draw from this a universal doctrine, namely, that the Lord wishes that his glory may remain unimpaired ; for he defends and maintains it everywhere with the utmost zeal, in order to shew that he is exceedingly jealous of it, (Exod. xx. 5,) and does not permit the smallest part of it to be given to another.

9. *The former things.* He now recalls to remembrance the former predictions, by the fulfilment of which he shews that confidence ought to be placed in him for the future ; for what we have known by actual experience ought to tend greatly to confirm our belief. It is as if he had said, " I have spoken so frequently to your fathers, and you have found me to be true in all things ; and yet you cannot place confidence in me about future events : the experience of past transactions produces no effect upon you, and does not excite you to do better." God's favours, therefore, ought to be mentioned by us in such a manner that, whenever our salvation lies concealed in hope, we may rest on the word of God, and be confirmed by it during the whole course of our life.

Behold ! they came.[1] By the adverb *behold*, he points out, as with the finger, that they had learned by experience, that God is not false, and did not speak in vain by the prophets ; because clear proofs openly testified and proclaimed the truth of God.

Before they spring forth.[2] He distinguishes God from idols by this mark, that he alone knows and predicts future events, but idols do not know them. As to the greater part of the responses which were given by the gods of the Gentiles, we have formerly seen[3] that they were either false or ambiguous ; for they who relied on them were often

[1] " By the former things he means those things which had been done in order to protect and deliver the Hebrew nation from the power of barbarians ; and those things which Jehovah had foretold by his prophets *came*, that is, they happened."—*Rosenmüller*.

[2] " That is, before they took place, as in Isaiah xliii. 12. The metaphor is taken from plants, which put forth the buds and flowers before their fruits are visible. (Gen. ii. 5 ; Exod. x. 5.) The meaning is, that God does not foretell those things which have already begun to be accomplished, and which sagacious men may conjecture to be future ; but before anything has happened, from which a conjecture may be formed as to future events."—*Rosenmüller*.

[3] See page 271.

shamefully deceived, and this is the reward which they richly deserved. And if at first sight the event corresponded, this plunged them deeper in eternal perdition; and by the righteous judgment of God it was brought about that Satan imposed upon them by such delusions. Far otherwise was it with the sacred oracles, by which the Church, for her own advantage and salvation, was at one time brought to repentance, and at another time encouraged to entertain favourable hope, that she might not sink under the burden of punishments. It remains a settled principle, that all that God has foretold is verified by the event; for he rules and directs all things by his providence.

10. *Sing to Jehovah.* He now exhorts the people to gratitude; for God's favours ought always to excite us, by the remembrance of them, to give thanks and to celebrate his praises. Besides, by that exhortation he calls believers to behold the prophecy as actually accomplished, and confirms those promises of which he spoke. We ought to observe this as the design of the Prophet, that there is no reason why believers, though they are severely oppressed, should give way to sorrow, but that good hope ought to encourage them to gladness, that they may now prepare to render thanksgiving.

The subject of this song is, that Christ has been revealed to the world, and sent by the Father, in order to relieve the miseries of his Church, and to restore her to perfect order, and indeed, as it were, to renew the whole world. As it was difficult to believe this, the Prophet wished to remove every doubt, in order to fix these predictions more deeply in their hearts. Nor ought we to wonder that the Prophet labours so hard to arouse them when they were reduced to the greatest straits, and had no longer any hope of safety. The mere aspect of things might shake their faith, and even produce suspicion that all that the prophets had foretold was unfounded and absurd. The object of this exhortation therefore is, that when affairs are utterly desperate, they should be cheerful and rely on these promises.

A new song. By *new* he means an excellent, beautiful, and elegant song, not one that is ordinary or common, but a song which may arouse men to admiration, as relating to

the extraordinary grace of God, of which there had never been so remarkable an example. In this sense it is also used in Psalm xxxiii. 3, and xcvi. 1. *New* is here contrasted with what is Ordinary, and thus he extols the infinite mercy of God, which was to be revealed in Christ, and which ought therefore to be celebrated and sung with the highest praises. Hence we infer that each of us ought to be the more zealous in proclaiming the praises of God, in proportion to the greater number of favours which we have received. It is indeed the duty of all men to sing praise to God, for there is no person who is not bound to it by the strongest obligations; but more lofty praises ought to proceed from those on whom more valuable gifts have been bestowed. Now, since God has laid open the fountain of all blessings in Christ, and has displayed all spiritual riches, we need not wonder if he demand that we offer to him an unwonted and excellent sacrifice of praise.

It ought to be observed that this *song* cannot be sung but by renewed men; for it ought to proceed from the deepest feeling of the heart, and therefore we need the direction and influence of the Spirit, that we may sing those praises in a proper manner. Besides, he does not exhort one or a few nations to do this, but all the nations in the world; for to all of them Christ was sent.

11. *Let the desert and its cities cry aloud.* While the Prophet includes all the parts of the world, he mentions particularly those which were better known to the Jews; for on the west Judea had the sea, and on the east the desert and Arabia. When he speaks of the tents of *Kedar*, the *desert*, and the *rocks*, he means Arabia; but it is a figure of speech by which a part is taken for the whole, for it includes the whole of the east. It is as if he had said, that from the rising to the setting of the sun these praises shall be heard; for God shall be worshipped everywhere, though formerly he was worshipped in Judea alone; and thus the state of affairs shall be changed, and that praise shall be heard in the most distant parts of the earth.[1]

[1] "If these are not all parts of the same great picture, it is impossible to frame one. If they are, it is absurd to take the first and last parts in

The towns where Kedar dwells. He mentions *Kedar*, because the Scenite[1] Arabians, as is well known, dwelt in tents. But he employs the word *towns*, while he is speaking of a desert; and therefore it ought to be remarked, that *desert* denotes not only the vast wilderness which lay between Judea and Arabia, but the more distant countries which were commonly designated from that part which was adjoining to them, as some people give the name of "mountainous" to those plains which lie beyond the mountains; for the common people have their attention so much directed to what they see close at hand, that they suppose them to resemble other places that are more distant. Yet the Prophet here exalts and magnifies the greatness of the grace of God, in reaching even rude and barbarous nations, whose savage cruelty was well known.

12. *Let them give glory to Jehovah.* He explains what the nature of that shouting will be, that is, to celebrate the praises of God; for his goodness and mercy shall be everywhere seen; and therefore he enjoins them to celebrate this redemption with a cheerful voice, because the blessed consequences of it shall be shared by all the nations. And thus we are reminded to cry aloud in the present day with the greatest earnestness when we proclaim the praises of God, that we ourselves may be inflamed, and may excite others by our example to act in the same manner; for to be lukewarm, or to mutter, or to sing, as the saying is, to themselves and to the muses, is impossible for those who have actually tasted the grace of God.

13. *Jehovah like a giant.* What Isaiah now adds is intended to surmount the temptations of believers. He ascribes to God strength and power, that they may know that they shall find in him a sure defence; for in adversity we are perplexed, because we doubt whether or not God will be able to

their widest sense as an extravagant hyperbole, and that which is between them in its strictest sense as a literal description. The only consistent supposition is, that sea, islands, deserts, mountains, towns, and camps, are put together as poetical ingredients of the general conception, that the earth in all its parts shall have reason to rejoice."—*Alexander.*

[1] The name is derived from σκηνὴ (*skēnē*), "a tent," because they dwelt in tents. Their modern name is Saracens.—*Ed.*

render us assistance, especially when by delaying he appears in some measure to reject our prayers; and therefore the Prophet loudly extols the power of God, that all may learn to rely and place their confidence in him.

Will go forth. The *going forth* that is here mentioned must be taken metaphorically; for God seemed to be concealed at the time when he permitted his people to be afflicted and oppressed without any appearance of aid; and therefore the word means "to come forth publicly for the sake of giving assistance." This is confirmed by what follows.

And as a warrior. When he attributes to God burning indignation, with which he rushes forth "like a warrior" against his enemies, the comparisons are drawn from human feelings, and declare to us the powerful assistance of God, which would not otherwise make a sufficiently powerful impression on our minds. He therefore accommodates himself to our capacity, as we have often said, that we may know how ardently he desires to preserve us, and how much he is distressed by the affliction and oppression of believers, and likewise how terrible is his anger, whenever he girds himself for battle.

We ought always to observe that peculiar season which the Prophet had in his eye, to which these predictions must be applied; for while the enemies were becoming more and more fierce, and were taunting a wretched people, it was the duty of believers to look at something quite different from what they beheld with their eyes, and to believe that God is sufficiently powerful to subdue their enemies, and rescue them out of their hands. Nor was it only during the captivity that it was of importance for them to have their sorrow alleviated by this promise, but almost till the coming of Christ; for they were continually and painfully constrained to encounter severe distresses, as is evident from history.

14. *I have kept silence.* The Prophet meets the temptations which commonly give us great uneasiness, when God delays his aid. We are tempted by impatience, and dread that his promises are false. We reckon it unreasonable that God should be silent, and fall asleep, so to speak, while the wicked carry themselves high; that he should be cool, while

they burn with eagerness to do mischief; and that he should wink at their crimes, while they keenly pursue every kind of cruelty. When their minds were distressed and almost overwhelmed, the Prophet wished to comfort them, that they might not think that God had forsaken them, though everything appeared to be desperate.

For a long time. He expressly mentions "the great length of time," that their hearts might not languish through the tedious delay; for when they had been broken down by almost incessant calamities since the death of Jehoshaphat, it was very hard and distressing to spend seventy years in captivity. Nor was even this the end of their afflictions, and therefore they needed to be carefully admonished, that although God do not immediately send relief, still believers will suffer nothing by the delay, provided that they wait with patience. By these words he also rebukes unbelievers, who, trusting to his forbearance, freely indulged in every kind of wickedness; and therefore God declares that, although he has refrained and been a silent spectator, he is not on that account deprived of his power.

Like a woman in labour. By this metaphor he expresses astonishing warmth of love and tenderness of affection; for he compares himself to a mother who singularly loves her child, though she brought him forth with extreme pain. It may be thought that these things are not applicable to God; but in no other way than by such figures of speech can his ardent love towards us be expressed. He must therefore borrow comparisons from known objects, in order to enable us to understand those which are unknown to us; for God loves very differently from men, that is, more fully and perfectly, and, although he surpasses all human affections, yet nothing that is disorderly belongs to him.

Besides, he intended also to intimate that the redemption of his people would be a kind of birth, that the Jews might know that the grave would serve them for a womb, and that thus, in the midst of corruption, they might entertain the hope of salvation. Although he produced a new Church for himself without pain or effort, yet, in order to exhibit more fully the excellence of his grace in this new birth, he not in-

appropriately attributes to himself the cry of "a woman in labour."

I will destroy and swallow at once. Because that comparison of a travailing woman might somewhat degrade the majesty and power of God, the Prophet determined to add here a different feeling. So far then as relates to love, he says that God resembles a mother; so far as relates to power, he says that he resembles a lion or a giant.

15. *I will reduce mountains and hills to a wilderness.* The Prophet means that all the defences and military forces on which the wicked plume themselves shall not prevent God from setting his people at liberty. It was necessary that this should be added to the former statements; for when we see enemies exceedingly powerful, and almost invincible, we tremble, and do not look for God's assistance, which would be necessary to keep our faith strong. On this point, therefore, the Prophet dwells, in order to shew that no power or army whatsoever can resist the Lord when he wishes to deliver his people. In short, he shews that there shall be such a revolution, that they who formerly were most powerful shall be crushed, and shall gain nothing by all their attempts against him.

Such appears to me to be the plain meaning of this passage, and there is no necessity for entering into ingenious speculations, as some have done, who, in an allegorical interpretation of these words, pronounce that by "mountains and hills" are meant cities, and by *herbage* the men who inhabit them. But there is no necessity for pursuing such refinements; for he simply declares that God is sufficiently powerful to fulfil his promises and deliver his Church, because he will easily surmount all the difficulties which present themselves to our eyes. This statement corresponds also to other predictions which we have formerly seen, in which the Prophet taught that as soon as God has determined to assist his people, his power is not limited to natural means, but miraculously breaks through every obstruction that appears to hinder his passage.

16. *And I will lead the blind.* After having shewn that the strength of the enemies cannot prevent God from deliver-

ing his people, he proceeds with that consolation to which he had formerly adverted. He describes by the word *blind* those whose affairs are so difficult, and intricate, and disordered, that they know not to what hand to turn, or in what direction to flee, and, in short, who see no means of escape, but deep gulfs on every hand. When our affairs proceed smoothly enough, a plain and easy path is placed before our eyes; and, in like manner, when our affairs are painful and distressing, and especially when they hold out no hope of relief, but threaten destruction to us, and are covered with deep and melancholy darkness, we are blinded. When we have thus no means of escape, the Prophet tells us that at that very time we ought especially to hope and to look for assistance from the Lord.

It is often advantageous to us also to have no way open to us, to be straitened and hemmed in on every hand, and even to be blinded, that we may learn to depend solely on God's assistance and to rely on him; for, so long as a plank is left on which we think that we can seize, we turn to it with our whole heart. While we are driven about in all directions, the consequence is, that the remembrance of heavenly grace fades from our memory. If, therefore, we desire that God should assist us and relieve our adversity, we must be *blind*, we must turn away our eyes from the present condition of things, and restrain our judgment, that we may entirely rely on his promises. Although this blindness is far from being pleasant, and shews the weakness of our mind, yet, if we judge from the good effects which it produces, we ought not greatly to shun it; for it is better to be "blind" persons guided by the hand of God, than, by excessive sagacity, to form labyrinths for ourselves.

And will turn darkness before them into light. When he promises that he will give "light" instead of "darkness," he confirms what has been already said; and therefore, although we see not even a ray of light in adversity, yet we ought not to despair of God's assistance, but at that very time we ought especially to embrace his promises; for the Lord will easily change darkness into light, make straight the crooked windings, and lead us into the path, that we

may walk with safety. Yet let us perceive that these things are promised to believers alone, who intrust themselves to God, and allow themselves to be governed by him; and, in short, who have known their blindness, and willingly follow him as their leader, and amidst the darkness of afflictions patiently wait for the dawn of grace. To those only who abide by his promises does he stretch out his hand, and not to the wise men,[1] who wish to see in spite of him, or who are carried headlong by unlawful schemes.

17. *They shall be driven back.* This enables us to see more clearly to whom the former doctrine relates, for it distinguishes between the worshippers of God and the worshippers of idols. The Lord will be a leader to his own people, but, on the other hand, *they who worship idols shall be ashamed.* As if he had said, that here the Lord gives us a choice, either to be saved by his grace, or to perish miserably; for all that place their hope of salvation in idols shall perish, but they who trust in the word of God are certain of salvation; because, though they often are heavily afflicted, yet he will not allow their hope to be put to shame in the end, but by the result will prove that he did not in vain lay down this distinction.

And say to a molten image, Ye are our gods. It is certain that by these two marks are described all idolaters who place their hope in any one else than in God alone; for, although idolaters do not bow down before their idols, yet, by attaching divinity to them, they offer blasphemy to the only and true God; for the chief part of the worship of God consists in faith and calling upon him, both of which the Prophet here describes. It may be asked, Were they so stupid as to say to an image, "Thou art my god?" for all superstitious persons confessed that God is in heaven, and did not openly ascribe divinity to wood or stone. I reply, all idolaters ascribe to images the power of God, though they acknowledge that he is in heaven; for, when they flee to statues and images, when they make and perform vows to them, they undoubtedly ascribe to them what belongs to God. It is in vain for them, therefore, to cloak their ignorance under plausible excuses, for they reckon wood and stone to

[1] "Non pas à ces sages mondains." "Not to these worldly wise men."

be gods, and offer the highest insult to God; and consequently, the Prophet did not employ exaggerated language, or falsely accuse them of being idolaters; for it is plainly testified by their words and speeches, when they call their idols and images gods. Even though they did not utter a word, their madness is openly manifested by their imagining that they cannot reach the hand or the ear of God without bowing down before images to utter their prayers. The object of these statements is, that all may understand that no man will be saved but he who trusts in God alone.

18. *O ye deaf, hear, and ye blind.* He now employs these words, "blind" and "deaf," in a sense different from that in which he formerly employed them, (verse 16,) when he metaphorically described those who had no understanding, and who were overwhelmed by such a mass of afflictions that they were blinded by their sorrow; for here he gives the name of *blind* to those who shut their eyes in the midst of light, and do not behold the works of God; and the name of *deaf* to those who refuse to hear him, and sink down into stupidity and slothfulness amidst the dregs of their ignorance. He therefore condemns the Jews for "blindness," or rather, in my own opinion, he condemns all men; for, while he directly reproaches the Jews because "in hearing they do not hear, and in seeing they do not see," (Isaiah vi. 9; Matt. xiii. 13,) yet this applies in some measure to the Gentiles, to whom God revealed himself by his creatures, on whose hearts and consciences also he impressed the knowledge of him, and to whom he had made and would still make known his wonderful works. By demanding attention, he pronounces that there is nothing that hinders them from comprehending the truth and power of God, except that they are "deaf and blind." Nor is this unaccompanied by malice and ingratitude; for he openly instructs them concerning his power, and gives them very striking proofs of it; but no one gives attention to his doctrine or to his wonderful actions, and the consequence is, that they are willingly "blind." Thus the Prophet shews that the fault lies wholly with men in not perceiving the power of God.

19. *Who is blind but my servant?* There are some who

interpret this verse as if the Prophet were describing the reproaches which wicked men are accustomed to throw out against the prophets; for they retort on the Lord's servants those reproofs and accusations which they cannot endure. "Whom dost thou accuse of blindness? Whom dost thou call deaf? Take that to thyself. Who is blind but thou?" They think, therefore, that it is as if the Lord expostulated with the Jews in this manner; "I see that you reckon my prophets to be blind and deaf." But we shall immediately see that this interpretation does not agree with the context, for the Prophet afterwards explains (verse 20) why he calls them "blind." It is because, while they see many things, they pay no attention to them. Indeed, this does not at all apply to the prophets, and therefore let us follow the plain and natural meaning.

Isaiah had accused all men of blindness, but especially the Jews, because they ought to have seen more clearly than all the rest; for they had not only some ordinary light and understanding, but enjoyed the word, by which the Lord abundantly revealed himself to them. Although, therefore, all the rest were blind, yet the Jews ought to have seen and known God, seeing that they were illuminated by his Law and doctrine, as by a very bright lamp. Besides, Isaiah afterwards addresses the Jews in this manner, "Arise, O Jerusalem, and be illuminated; for darkness shall be on all the earth, but the Lord shall shine on thee." (Isaiah lx. 1, 2.) Because the Jews shut their eyes amidst such clear light, that is the reason why he addresses to them this special reproof. As if he had said, "In vain do I debate with those who are alienated from me, and it is not so wonderful that they are blind; but it is monstrous that this should have happened to my servants (before whose eyes light has been placed) to be deaf to the doctrine which sounds continually in their ears. For these things are so clear that the blind might see them, and so loud that the deaf might hear them; but in vain do I speak to them, for nothing can be more dull or stupid; and, instead of seeing and hearing better than all others, as they ought to have done, none can be found either more deaf or more blind."

My messenger whom I send. From the human race universally the Prophet gradually descends to the Jews, and next to the priests, who were leading persons, and might be regarded as occupying the highest rank. It belonged to their office to interpret the Law, and to set a good example before others, and, in short, to point out the way of salvation. It was from "the priest's mouth" that they were commanded to "seek the Law." (Mal. ii. 7.) The Prophet complains, therefore, that they who ought to have led the way to others were themselves blind.

Some view the word *servant* as relating to Isaiah, and others to Christ, and think that he, as well as Isaiah, is accused of blindness; but this has nothing to do with the Prophet's meaning. Thus, he magnifies by comparison the complaint which he lately made about the slothfulness of the Jews; for they were more deeply in fault than others, but the heaviest blame lay on the priests who were their leaders. Let us therefore learn, that the nearer we approach to God, and the higher the rank to which we are elevated, we shall be the less excusable. For the same reason he applies the term *perfect* to those who ought to have been perfect; for he mentions reproachfully that perfection from which they had fallen by wicked revolt, and thus had basely profaned a most excellent gift of God. Having possessed a "perfect" rule of righteousness, it lay with themselves alone to follow it.

20. *Seeing many things.* The Prophet himself explains what is the nature of this blindness of which he spoke, and shews that it is double; and this shews clearly that he spoke of the Jews, who by wicked contempt had quenched God's light. Our guilt will be double when we shall come to the judgment-seat of God, if we shut our eyes when he exhibits the light, and shut our ears when he teaches by his word. The heathen nations will indeed be without excuse; but the Jews and others to whom the Lord revealed himself in so many ways, will deserve double condemnation for having refused to see or hear God. We, therefore, who have so many and so illustrious examples set before us at the present day, ought to dread this judgment; for in many persons there will now be found not less blindness or obduracy than formerly existed among the Jews, and not more excusable.

21. *The Lord is well pleased.* In order to aggravate still more the guilt of the Jews, he now shews that it was not God who prevented them from leading a prosperous and happy life. He had already said that the distresses and afflictions which they endure are the punishment of their blindness, which they have voluntarily brought upon themselves; and now he brings forward as an addition and crowning point of the accusation, that by their obstinacy they reject all relief.

This passage is interpreted in various ways. Some render it, "The Lord hath so willed it;" others, "He is merciful;" but, for my own part, I have translated it, "The Lord is willing," that is, disposed and inclined to deliver his people, and that for the purpose of magnifying his Law and extolling his righteousness. Thus God assigns the reason why he is ready to aid those who are unworthy, that he wishes to spread his glory in their salvation, that in this manner his righteousness may be illustriously displayed, and that his Law may prevail and flourish. As to the heavy calamities that have come on the Jews, the reason is, that of their own accord they have resolved to be blind, and to bring afflictions on themselves, instead of obeying God; for otherwise the Lord would have wished to enrich and exalt them. Others view it thus, "The Lord wishes to magnify his Law, because he wishes to appear to be faithful in punishing the Jews, as he had threatened them by his Law;" and thus they consider "righteousness" to denote the punishment and vengeance which God inflicts on a wicked people.

Others render it, "For his righteous one," and refer it to Christ; but they mistake the meaning of the word צדקו, (*tzĕdkō*,) and unquestionably he speaks of righteousness, and means that the Lord would willingly have displayed the magnificence of his promises, and would have given proofs of his righteousness in preserving his people, if they had not shewn themselves to be ungrateful and unworthy. Some think that the Lord here offers an excuse for himself, because, when the people whom he had adopted were exposed to so many evils, it appeared as if his truth were shaken, and that the Prophet intended to meet this calumny, for they were seized and became a prey, not because the Lord delights in

their miseries, but because he prefers his righteousness to everything else.

For my own part, I explain it simply to mean, "The Lord, for the sake of doing honour to his Law, was inclined to do good to his people, in order that his glory and righteousness might shine forth in it; but his people shewed themselves to be unworthy of so great a favour; and, therefore, by their own obduracy they made their wounds incurable." Besides, we ought to learn from this passage the reason why the Lord bestows so many favours on his Church. It is, that he may promote his Law, that is, that he may bring men to honour his majesty, and that his truth may shine more and more. When he says that the Lord is willing and inclined; he shews plainly that he is not induced to it by any one else than by himself; but he expresses it more fully, when he adds, *on account of his righteousness;* for he excludes everything that men could bring. Nor is the Lord prompted by any other consideration to do good, than because he is righteous; for no merit or worth will be found among men. But this reason applied especially to the Jews, whom alone he deigned to adopt.

22. *But this people.* Isaiah now declares that it is through their own fault that the people are miserable and appointed to destruction, because they reject God, who would otherwise have been inclined to do good to them, and because they deliberately set aside all remedies, and wish for death, as is commonly the case with men who are past hope. Thus he excuses God in such a manner as to bring a heavy accusation against the people, because they have rejected him by their ingratitude, and have abused his fatherly kindness. Yet, as I remarked a little before, he mentions these things, not so much for the sake of excusing God, as of bringing a bitter complaint, that his countrymen have leagued to their destruction; because, as if on set purpose, they have precipitated themselves into many calamities. If, then, we see the Church, at the present day, in a ruinous and revolting condition, we ought to ascribe it to our iniquities and transgressions, by which we do not suffer God to do good to us.

The copulative ו (*vau*) is rendered by some *therefore;*

but I have preferred to translate it *but;* for it states a contrast to that desire by which the Lord declared that he was prompted to defend his people, if they had permitted it. I choose to interpret הפח (*hāphēăch*) as a gerundial participle, *about to be snared;* for he speaks of a nation which was about to be led into captivity. As to בהורים, (*băhūrīm,*) I think that two words, instead of one, are here used to signify *in dens;* for to translate the word *young men,* appears to me to be at variance with the context.

They shall be made a spoil. They who interpret this as relating to the whole human race, who have no Saviour but Christ, (John viii. 36,) adduce nothing that corresponds to the Prophet's meaning; for he simply declares that the people shall perish without hope of deliverance, because they rejected the grace of God. Let us infer from this what must befall us, if we do not in due time embrace the grace of God offered to us. We shall certainly deserve to be deprived of all aid, to be exposed as a prey and a spoil, and utterly to perish.

23. *Who is there among you?* Isaiah continues the same subject; for he means that the Jews are and will be so stupid, that they will not see, even when they are warned; and he expressly addresses them, because, while they ought to have been better educated and taught than others, yet they understood nothing, and did not observe the judgments of God, even though they were exceedingly manifest.

Who shall hearken for the time to come? That is, who, being at length subdued by afflictions, repents, though it be late. We see, then, how this astonishment aggravates the criminality of their madness, because they will always refuse to be taught. Yet let us learn what is the use of threatenings and punishments; for God does not reprove our crimes, or punish us for them, as if he delighted in taking vengeance, or demanded some recompense, but that we may be on our guard "for the time to come."

24. *Who gave Jacob for a prey?* These are the matters which Isaiah complains that the Jews did not observe; for they thought either that the sufferings which they endured happened by chance, or that they had not the same strength

to resist as their fathers had, and that this was the reason why they were conquered by their enemies. In short, having their minds fully occupied with external causes, they did not at the same time observe the threatenings which had been so frequently denounced by the prophets, nor attend to the judgments of God; and therefore the Prophet drags them before the heavenly throne, by declaring that God is the author of these judgments.

Hath not Jehovah? They could not believe that the calamities which they suffered proceeded from God, as the just punishment of their sins; and we know that there is nothing which men can now be with more difficulty persuaded to believe. Everybody acknowledges that God is the author of all things, but if you ask whether or not all adverse events are God's chastisements, they will be ashamed to confess it; for men are distracted by a variety of thoughts, and, being prejudiced by their opinion of fortune, turn their minds and hearts to this or that cause rather than to God.

Because we have sinned against him. Isaiah next points out the cause of so grievous destruction, the sins of the people, which the Lord justly punished. In like manner, Moses had also shewn, "How would a thousand flee from the face of one? Doth not the Lord pursue you, and shut you up in the hands of the enemy?" (Deut. xxxii. 30.) We wonder every day at many things which happen contrary to our expectation, and yet we do not acknowledge that the cause lies with ourselves. It is therefore necessary that we be hard pressed and constrained by violence to confess our fault, and consequently this doctrine must be often stated and repeated.

That men may not accuse God of cruelty, the Prophet adds, that he does it for a just cause; for he does not rush forward[1] to inflict punishment, if he be not constrained by necessity, and he takes no pleasure in our afflictions; and, therefore, we must here observe two separate things. First, no evil happens to us, but from the Lord, so that we must not think that anything happens either by chance or by any

[1] "Car il n' empoigne la verge soudainement." "For he does not seize the rod suddenly."

external cause. Secondly, we suffer no evil whatever, but for a just cause, because we have sinned against God. In vain, therefore, do men accuse God of cruelty; for we ought to acknowledge his righteous judgments in the chastisements which he deservedly inflicts.

And they would not walk in his ways. Here the Prophet aggravates the guilt of the Jews, but changes the person, because he formerly included himself along with others, as being a member of that body, and confessed his guilt. Not that he resembled the great body of the people, or approved of their crimes; but because, amidst such a huge mass of vices, he could not be free from being in some degree infected by the contagion, like other parts of the body. Because he was widely different from the great body of the people, he changes the person, and adds, "*They* would not;" by which he declares that such deep-rooted obduracy is offensive to him, so that he cannot in any way either conceal it or express his approbation of it; for the subject now in hand is not ordinary vices, but contempt and rejection of God, manifested by fiercely and haughtily shaking off his yoke. This is the reason why Isaiah excludes himself from their number.

If these things justly befell the Jews, let us know that the same punishment hangs over us and the whole world, if we do not take warning and repent. We see how kindly the Lord invites us to himself, in how many ways he expresses his good-will towards us, how graciously he testifies that he will be reconciled, though he has been offended. Having now been so often and so kindly invited by God, and having experienced his mercy, if we refuse to listen to him, we shall undoubtedly feel that the ruin which they experienced belongs equally to all rebels.

25. *Therefore he hath poured upon him.* Because the chastisements by which the Lord had begun, and would afterwards continue, to punish the Jews, were very severe, the Prophet employs metaphorical language to express their vehemence. He says that the Lord *poureth out his fury*, as if a thunderbolt were discharged with violence, or as if waters burst forth, to spread devastation far and wide on the surrounding country; just as, at the deluge, when "the flood-

gates of the deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened," (Gen. vii. 11,) the waters burst forth with prodigious force and violence.

And the strength of war. He next employs a different figure, that God assembles his forces to make war, that he may attack the people with unrelenting hostility. If this be supposed to mean the enemies whom the Lord raised up against the Jews, I do not greatly object to the interpretation; for it is certain that they were raised up by the judgment of God. What else was Nebuchadnezzar than God's scourge? (Jer. li. 20.) But, for my own part, I think that this also ought to be viewed as metaphorical language, meaning that "God rushes forth violently, like an armed enemy, and pours out his fury on the people." He has various ways of making war; for he chastises his people sometimes by famine, sometimes by war, and sometimes by pestilence; and therefore I think that he includes here scourges of every kind by which the Lord strikes his people. If we sometimes think that they are too harsh and severe, let us consider how heinous our sins are; for we shall not find that he is immoderate or excessively severe in inflicting punishment.

And he gave no heed to it. Again the Prophet exclaims against that gross stupidity with which the Jews were struck, so that they did not perceive their affliction, nor raise their eyes to heaven, so as to acknowledge that the Lord was the avenger and author of it.[1]

And he laid it not to heart. To "lay a thing to heart" is to consider attentively and diligently; for if this thought came into our minds, and were deeply engraven on our hearts, "God is judge, and hath justly punished us," we should immediately repent. At present the whole world is oppressed by so many calamities, that there is scarcely a spot that is free from the wrath of God; yet no person gives heed to it, but all fiercely and rebelliously contend with him; and therefore we need not wonder that he inflicts on men such dreadful punishment, and pours out his wrath on all sides, when the world opposes him with inveterate rebellion.

[1] "Pour recognoistre Dieu, qui les chastioit si rudement." "To acknowledge God, who chastised them so severely."

CHAPTER XLIII.

1. But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine.

1. Et nunc sic dicit Iehova creator tuus, Iacob; fictor tuus, Israel. Ne timeas, quoniam redemi (te,) vocavi te nomine tuo; meus (es) tu.

2. When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

2. Quum transieris per aquas, ego tecum (ero;) in fluminibus, non inundabunt te. Quum transieris per ignem ipsum, non combureris; nec flamma ardebit in te.

3. For I *am* the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt *for* thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

3. Quoniam ego Iehova Deus tuus, Sanctus Israel, servator tuus; dedi pretium redemptionis tuæ, Ægyptum, Æthiopiam, et Saba in vicem tuam.

4. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

4. Quia pretiosus fuisti in oculis meis, honoratus es, et ego dilexi te. Tradam hominem in vicem tuam, et populos in vicem animæ tuæ.

5. Fear not: for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;

5. Ne timeas, quia ego tecum. Ab Oriente adducam semen tuum, et ab Occidente colligam te.

6. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;

6. Dicam Aquiloni, Da, et Austro, Ne prohibeas. Adducito filios meos e longinquo, et filias meas ab extremo terræ.

7. *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

7. Omnes vocati nomine meo, et ad gloriam meam creavi eos; formavi eos, adeoque feci eos.

8. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.

8. Ut educam populum cæcum, cui oculi; et surdos, quibus aures.

9. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is* truth.

9. Omnes gentes congregentur simul, et colligantur populi. Quis est in eis qui istud annuntiet, ac priora nos audire faciat? Proferant testes suos, justi pronuntientur; sed audiant, et dicent, Verum est.

10. Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that

10. Vos testes mei, dicit Iehova, et servus meus quem elegi. Propterea scietis, et credetis mihi, et intelligetis quòd ego sum; ante me

I *am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

11. I, *even* I, *am* the Lord; and besides me *there is* no saviour.

12. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when *there was* no strange *god* among you: therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I *am* God.

13. Yea, before the day *was* I *am* he; and *there is* none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

14. Thus saith the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry *is* in the ships.

15. I *am* the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.

16. Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters;

17. Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army, and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.

18. Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.

19. Behold, I will do a new thing: now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert.

20. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.

21. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

22. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.

23. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me

non est formatus Deus, nec post me erit.

11. Ego, ego sum Iehova, et nullus præter me servator.

12. Ego annuntiavi, et servavi, et audire feceram; et non in vobis alienus. Vos ergo testes mei, dicit Iehova, quòd ego sim Deus.

13. Etiam antequam dies esset, ego eram; et non est qui e manu mea eruat; faciam, et quis avertet illud?

14. Sic dicit Iehova redemptor vester, Sanctus Israelis: Propter vos misi in Babylonem, et descendere feci. Omnes ipsi fugitivi; et Chaldæorum clamor in navibus.

15. Ego Iehova, Sanctus vester, creator Israel, Rex vester.

16. Sic dicit Iehova, qui dat in mari viam, et in aquis violentis semitam.

17. Quum educit, currus et equus, exercitus et robur simul jacent, ut non surgant. Extincti sunt; sicut linum extincti sunt.

18. Ne recordemini priorum, et antiqua ne memoretis.

19. Ecce ego facio rem novam; jam orietur; an non eam cognoscetis? Hac vice (*vel*, *utique*) ponam in deserto viam; flumina in solitudine.

20. Honorabit me bestia agri; dracones, et pulli struthionis; quia dederim in deserto aquas, flumina in solitudine, ad potandum populum meum, electum meum.

21. Populum hunc creavi mihi; laudem meam narrabit.

22. Et non me invocasti, Iacob; quin fatigatus es in me, Israel.

23. Non adduxisti mihi pecus holocaustorum tuorum, et sacrificiis tuis non honorasti me; non feci te

with thy sacrifices: I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.

24. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

25. I, *even* I, *am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

26. Put me in remembrance; let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.

27. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.

28. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

servire in oblatione, nec laborare in suffitu.

24. Non emisti mihi pecunia calamum, nec adipe victimarum tuarum inebriasti me; sed me servire fecisti in peccatis tuis, et me laborare fecisti in iniquitatibus tuis.

25. Ego, ego sum qui deleo iniquitates tuas propter me; ideo peccatorum tuorum non recordabor.

26. Reduc mihi in memoriam; judicemur simul; narra tu, ut justificeris.

27. Pater tuus primus peccavit, et doctores tui in me prævaricati sunt.

28. Ideo polluam Principes sanctuarii, et ponam in execrationem Iacob, et Israel in opprobrium.

1. *And now thus saith Jehovah.* It is hard to say whether this is a different discourse or the same with the former; for the Prophets, whose writings have come down to us, did not separate their discourses into distinct chapters, so as to enable us to know what they spoke each day. For my own part, I think it is probable that this doctrine is connected with the preceding; for, having formerly spoken severely against the Jews, and threatened destruction to them, he wished to moderate that severity. The Lord always cares for the godly; and wickedness never abounds to such an extent that he does not at the same time preserve his people, and provide for their safety, that they may not be involved in similar destruction. I think, therefore, that the copulative ו (*vau*) should be viewed as disjunctive, "*And yet* the Lord will leave some consolation to the godly who shall remain."

This passage ought to be carefully observed; for, although it may appear as if all had leagued for our destruction, although the anger of the Lord burn fiercely, and we think that we are very near destruction; yet, if but two or three godly persons are left, we ought not to despair; for Jehovah addresses them in this manner, *Fear not.* The adverb *Now,*

which is here used, has great weight; for it means a present or immediate calamity, and, in short, a time when it appeared as if all were lost and ruined; because at that very time God does not cease to comfort his people, and gently to soothe their sorrows, that amidst the utmost despair they may preserve their hope firm and unshaken.

Such is the purport of the preface, *thy Creator and Maker;* for otherwise the door would have been shut against the execution of these predictions. Besides, from other passages we may conclude, that the Lord does not here speak of universal creation, such as we share with the rest of men, and by which we are born mortal, but of regeneration to the hope of a heavenly life, on account of which we are also called new creatures. This is the sense in which Paul calls us "the workmanship of God," (Eph. ii. 10,) as on former occasions we have fully explained.[1] In this sense also he calls himself the *Maker;* as if he had said, that God did not "make" his Church, in which the brightness of his glory shone conspicuously, in order to undo so excellent a work. Hence we ought to observe, that the Church has nothing that is properly her own, but everything in which she excels ought to be ascribed to the gift of God.

For I have redeemed thee. This is added as the reason of the former statement, and may appropriately be viewed as referring both to the future and to the past; for the first deliverance from Egypt gave hope of another deliverance to come. Although he describes a future deliverance from the Babylonish captivity, yet the past tense is not inapplicable; for God hath redeemed us to himself before the effect of redemption reaches us; and therefore when he wishes to testify what he has decreed, namely, to redeem his Church, which appeared to have perished, he uses with propriety the past tense.

I have called thee by thy name. To "call by one's name" means here, to admit into close relationship, as when we are adopted by God to be his children. The reason of this mode of expression is, that God rejects the reprobate in such a

[1] See Commentary on Isaiah, vol. ii. pages 83 and 264, and page 132 of the present volume.

manner that he appears to have forgotten them. Hence, also, the Scripture says, that "he knoweth them not." (Matt. vii. 23; Luke xiii. 27.) From a contrast of this sort we learn more fully what is meant by being "called by God." It is when he passes by others, and deigns to bestow on us a peculiar honour, and, from being strangers, to make us members of his household, and next takes us under his care and guardianship, so as to direct us and all our affairs. For the same reason he adds, *Thou art mine,* that believers may know that there will always be left a Church among the elect people, because God refuses to be deprived of his rightful possession. In short, he declares that they are his dear inheritance, of which he will never suffer himself to be robbed.

2. *When thou shalt pass through the waters.* This is an anticipation by which he declares that they who rely on God's immediate assistance have no reason for sinking under adversity. That is stated more fully than in the preceding verse, because while he shews that the Church will not be exempt from calamities and afflictions, but must maintain a constant warfare, he encourages to patience and courage; as if he had said, "The Lord hath not redeemed thee that thou mightest enjoy pleasures and luxuries, or that thou mightest abandon thyself to ease and indolence, but rather that thou shouldest be prepared for enduring every kind of evils."

By *fire* and *water* he means every kind of miseries to which we are liable in this life; for we must contend not with calamities of one kind only, but with infinitely diversified calamities. At one time we must "pass through water," and at another "through fire." (Psalm lxvi. 12.) In like manner the Apostle James exhorts believers not to faint when they "fall into various temptations." (James i. 2.) And, indeed, faith needs to be put to the trial in many ways; for it often happens that he who has been victorious in one combat has been baffled by another kind of temptation. We are therefore tried by afflictions, but are at length delivered; we are baffled by the billows, but are not swallowed up; we are even scorched by the flames, but are not consumed. We have, indeed, the same feeling of pain as other men, but we

are supported by the grace of God, and fortified by the spirit of patience, that we may not faint; and at length he will stretch out his hand and lift us up on high.[1]

3. *For I am Jehovah thy God.* He confirms the preceding statement by the experience of the past; for the Lord had formerly assisted his people in such a manner that it was reasonable and proper that believers should safely rely on his grace. We must always remember what we had in the former verse,—"Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I am thy Lord." These ought to be read unitedly and in immediate connection, because they have the same object; for if the Lord is our God, it follows that he is on our side, and therefore we shall find that he is our Saviour. But if we wish to know by experience that he is our Saviour, we must be a part of Israel, not in name only, but so as to give true evidences of godliness during the whole course of our life. This is therefore the foundation of our confidence, that "Jehovah is our God;" and hence it follows that they who do not acknowledge God to be their Father, and who do not rely on his kindness, are wretched, and tremble continually. Wicked men, indeed, indulge in mirth, and even act disdainfully towards God; but their indifference is intoxication and madness of mind, by which they are the more rapidly carried headlong to their destruction. To believers alone this brings the assurance, that he who hath chosen them wishes to be continually their God, and to preserve them; and therefore hath separated them to be his inheritance.

In this sense he calls himself *The Holy One of Israel*, because while the whole human race is by nature estranged from him, he hath chosen his people that he might set them apart to be his own. Now, though external separation is of little moment, unless God sanctify the elect by the power of his Spirit, yet, because Israel had openly polluted himself, God declares that still his covenant shall not be made void, because he is always like himself. Besides, it is well known that the word *holy* is used in an active sense for "him who sanctifies;" and therefore if we wish to be certain of God's

[1] "Jusqu' a ce qu'il nous esleve en haut a soy." "Till he raise us on high to himself."

love towards us, let us always remember the testimony of our adoption, by which we are confirmed in our hearts, as by a sure pledge, and let us with all earnestness ask it from God.

I have given the price of thy redemption. I make no remarks on those repetitions which are frequently used by the Prophet, and are customary in the Hebrew language; for the two phrases in this verse, *I have given the price*, and *I have given instead of thee*, are used by him in the same sense. We have said that the Prophet confirms believers by bringing forward earlier proofs of the grace of God; as if he had said, "You have already known by experience that God cares for your salvation; for how could it have happened that Sennacherib turned his forces against Egypt, Ethiopia, and other nations, but because the Lord spared you, and directed the attack of your enemy to another quarter? Since therefore he has hitherto manifested so great anxiety on your behalf, you have no need to be anxious about the future." Thus if at any time doubts arise in our minds about the providence of God, or about his promises, we ought to bring to remembrance the benefits which he has already bestowed upon us; for we shall be chargeable with extreme ingratitude if, after having received from God so many benefits, we doubt of his kindness for the future.

But a question arises. In what sense does he call "Egypt and Ethiopia the price of the redemption" of the Church? for heathen men are not of so high value as to redeem the children of God. But the Prophet borrowed this mode of expression from the ordinary language of men; as if he had said, "The Egyptians, the Ethiopians, and the Sabeans came in thy room, and, as if an exchange had been made, were constrained to suffer the destruction to which thou wast exposed; for, in order to preserve thee, I destroyed them, and delivered them instead of thee into the hand of the enemy." But we must attend to the history. While Sennacherib was rushing on with his whole might against Judea, the Lord, by throwing over him a bridle, suddenly checked him, and entangled him by other wars, so that he was constrained to withdraw his army; and thus the Egyptians and Ethiopians were signally defeated, while the

people of God were allowed to breathe. (2 Kings xix. 28; Isaiah xxxvii. 8.)

We too may readily acknowledge, if we are not worse than stupid, that the same providence and infinite mercy of God have been manifested toward us, when tyrants who would have wished to destroy us, and who joined in opening their mouths with eagerness to devour us, are made by him to engage in wars against each other, and when the rage with which they burned against us is directed by him to another quarter; for by doing so he preserves us, so as to give them as the price of our redemption. When we see irreligious men, amidst the uproar and confusion of mutual wars, pause in their efforts to destroy us, while it is manifest that they do not pause of their own accord, let us lift up our eyes to heaven, and learn that God, in order to spare us, miraculously substitutes others in our room; for we were "like sheep appointed for slaughter," (Psalm xliv. 22;) swords were drawn on every hand, if he had not snatched them from the hands of wicked men, or given them a different direction.

Hence we ought to draw a general doctrine, that the Lord takes such care of all believers (1 Pet. v. 7) that he values them more highly than the whole world. Although, therefore, we are of no value, yet let us rejoice in this, that the Lord sets so high a value upon us, and prefers us to the whole world, rescues us from dangers, and thus preserves us in the midst of death. If everything were at peace with us, and if we had no troubles, we should not see this grace of God; for when a thousand deaths appear to hang over us, and when there appears no way of escape, and when he suddenly drives back the tyrants, or turns them in another direction, we then know by experience what the Prophet says, and perceive his invaluable kindness toward us.

4. *Because thou wast precious.* Others interpret it "Thou wast honourable, because I raised thee to honour;" but I think that God assigns the reason why he gave up Egypt and Ethiopia to the enemies in their room. It was because he loved them, and because they were dear to him. It ought to be explained thus,—"Because I loved thee, therefore I gave a man for thee." By these words he excludes all per-

sonal worth on the part of the people, that they may not boast of having obtained anything by their own merit; and, indeed, the cause of salvation, and of all the blessings which we receive, is the undeserved love of God; it is also the cause of all our excellence; for, if he judge of us according to our own qualifications, he will not value us a straw. We must therefore set aside every idea of merit, or of personal worth, of which we have none, and must ascribe everything to the grace of God alone. He means that this love is not of an ordinary kind when he says that we are "precious;" and for the same reason he calls us "his first-born," (Exod. iv. 22,) and "his friends." (John xv. 15.)

I will give a man. Here he adds nothing new, but rather explains the preceding statement, and employs the word "man" collectively for "men;" as if he had said, "There will be no man whom God will not take away and destroy, in order to preserve his people; for he sets a higher value on a single believer than on the whole world." At the same time he reminds believers that they are redeemed at the expense of those who do not at all differ from them in origin or in nature.

5. *Fear not.* When Isaiah frequently repeats this exhortation, we ought not to look upon it as superfluous; for we know and feel how prone we are by nature to distrust. Scarcely any words can express the greatness of the alarm by which the Church was at that time shaken. As soon as we begin to call in question the promises of God, our minds are distracted by various thoughts; we are alarmed and continually tormented by the greatness and diversity of the dangers, till at length we are stupified, and have no perception of the grace of God. Accordingly, before despair seize our hearts, it is not without good reason that he so frequently repeats *I am with thee,* in order that he may either destroy altogether or partially mitigate the fear which is seated in our hearts; for, when it has taken root, there is no method of curing it. This should lead us also to remark, that we ought not to place our safety in anything else than in the presence of God; for if he be absent, we shall either shudder with fear, or become stupid, or run headlong like drunk-

ards. And yet it is not the will of God that we shall be so devoid of fear as to give ourselves up to slothfulness and indifference; but when we are informed that he is at hand and will assist us, cheerful confidence ought to be victorious in the midst of fears.

I will bring thy seed from the east. This passage is evidently taken from the writings of Moses, as we said at the beginning of this commentary,[1] that the prophets are his interpreters, and draw their doctrine from his books; and therefore the Prophet applies this passage to that particular event which he had in view in the present discourse. Moses had thus foretold, "The Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and will have compassion on thee, and will turn and gather thee out of all the nations into which thy God hath scattered thee. Even if thou shalt be driven to the utmost parts of heaven, thence will thy God gather thee, and thence will he take thee." (Deut. xxx. 3, 4.) What Moses spoke in general terms the Prophet here confirms in a particular instance, and again declares with a slight change of the words. The amount of what is stated is, that it is as difficult to gather a people that is not only scattered, but driven to the most distant countries of the world, as it is to gather ashes that have been scattered here and there; but that God, by his wonderful power, will cause those dislocated members to unite again in one body.

6. *I will say to the north.* Under these four parts he includes the whole world, which is very customary in all languages. But Isaiah speaks in somewhat loftier language than Moses, because he wished the people to view the event as if it had actually occurred; and, to such a purpose those lively descriptions which may be said to place it before our eyes, are admirably adapted. He might, indeed, have said it in a single word, but this manner of address is far more forcible; for he represents God as commanding, with supreme authority, all the creatures, and every part of the world, to set his people free.

Bring my sons. He means that not all Israel shall be gathered, but only that which is the true Israel; for not all who are the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh

[1] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. i. p. xxvi.

are true Israelites, but very many of them are bastards. (Rom. ix. 6, 7.) These belong to the true and lawful seed; for that vast multitude of people was not saved, but only "a remnant," as we saw in a former chapter. (Isaiah x. 21, 22.) There was a vast number of people who were carried away into captivity, but there were few who were brought back. Among them was preserved a seed; and the Lord would not suffer that seed to perish, or the covenant which he had made with their fathers to be broken. These things were very hard to be believed by the Jews, who were despised by all, and were exposed not only to the hatred but to the curses of almost the whole world, and were scarcely reckoned to belong to the number of men; and therefore they must have depended solely on the promises. They knew that Cyrus (Isaiah xlv. 1) would come, but who he was they were not yet able to conceive, for he had not yet been born; and therefore they needed to be armed with very excellent and steadfast faith, in order to wait for the Lord with unshaken confidence, while many reckoned these predictions to be fables. Let us learn also from this example to look to God alone, so as not to doubt that he will assist us and will abide by his promises at the proper time.

7. *All called.* Such is my interpretation of this clause, for the Prophet has made use of the singular number instead of the plural. Interpreters have mistaken the import of this mode of expression; for they explain it thus, "Whosoever have been called by my name, I have formed them to my glory." But I understand it thus, "All called," that is, "All shall be called by my name;" as he says in other passages, "My name shall be called upon them." (Gen. xlviii. 16; Deut. xxviii. 10; Isaiah iv. 1.) Why so? "Because I have created them, I have formed them, I have made them for my glory." He pursues the subject which he formerly handled about gathering the people into one body, though they have been scattered into various and distant parts of the world; as if he had said, "If this work appears to be incredible, you ought not to judge of it by the ordinary course of nature, but you ought to look to his power."

By my name; that is, "under my direction;" as we have

also said, in expounding another passage, (Isaiah xli. 25,) that God is reconciled to us, because by the right of adoption we are accounted his people. Now, because the Jews were to be brought back under his guidance and command, and not by the power or assistance of men, he declares that his name will be rendered illustrious in this deliverance, in order that men may learn not to form their judgments from the views of the flesh or from natural means.

For my glory. The Prophet adds the reason, which contains strong ground of confirmation; that is, that he wishes his glory to be manifested in them. He therefore testifies that the salvation of his people concerns himself, that he can no more throw away the care of his people than he can expose his name to reproach and disgrace, which he will never do, and, in a word, that his glory, of which he is the continual defender, is intimately connected with the salvation of his people.

I have formed him, yea, I have made him. For the sake of amplification he repeats the same thing in many forms of language, that they may be more fully convinced that he wishes to conduct to the end the work which he has begun. Such is the force of the particle אַף, (*ăph,*) which means "likewise," or "even," and sometimes, as we say, "for this time." Accordingly, the meaning is generally supposed to be, "In like manner, as I have created and formed that people, so I desire to elevate them to a new rank, and to restore them to their ancient freedom." It may also be rendered *and so,* and, as I have said, I prefer this rendering, so as to mean not only that the people have nothing but from his grace, but that he is deeply concerned about their salvation, because he cannot despise his own work, a work so remarkable and excellent. This passage, therefore, recommends to us the extraordinary grace of God, by which we are not only born to be men, but likewise formed anew after his image.

8. *That I may bring out.* The brevity of the words makes the meaning somewhat obscure. Some translate it thus, "I will bring out the blind, and him who hath eyes," that is, both the blind and them that see, both the deaf and them that hear. Some explain *blind* to mean those who have indeed eyes, but so dim that they cannot perceive the secrets

of heavenly wisdom. But when I take a careful survey of the whole, I prefer to interpret those phrases separately. "I will bring out the blind, so as to restore sight to them; I will bring out the deaf, so that they shall recover their hearing." And thus the meaning of the words is, "To bring out the blind, and they shall have eyes; and to bring out the deaf, and they shall have ears." The people are first delivered, and then eyes and ears are restored to them.

The Lord did this when he brought his people out of Babylon; but undoubtedly the Prophet looks farther, that is, to the kingdom of Christ; for at that time believers were gathered not only out of Babylon, but out of all places of the earth. This was seen openly and singularly at Peter's first sermon, when many persons from various countries united in the same confession of faith. (Acts ii. 41.) But afterwards others, who appeared to be altogether strangers, united in the same body, and shewed that they were children of Abraham. If, therefore, we wish to find the full truth of this prophecy, we must come to Christ, by whom alone we are rescued from the bondage of the devil and restored to liberty. (John viii. 36.) It is he who restores to us eyes and ears, though formerly we were by nature both blind and deaf. Yet it is proper to remember what I have repeatedly stated on former occasions, that the return of the people is closely connected with the renewal of the Church, which was accomplished by Christ; for what God began by bringing his people out of captivity he continued till Christ, and then brought to perfection; and so it is one and the same redemption. Hence it follows that the blessings which are here mentioned ought not to be limited to a short time.

9. *Let all the nations be gathered together.* Here the Prophet, as on former occasions, speaks in the person of God, and bids defiance to all idols. It is highly necessary, and was at that time especially necessary, to distinguish between the true God and false gods. It is easy indeed to ascribe to God the glory of divinity, but it is very difficult to claim it for him so exclusively, that all false gods shall be reduced to nothing; and at that time the error regarding them had received greater confirmation, for at the ruin of the nation

unbelievers applauded the gods as if they had vanquished the true God. The Prophet therefore suggests to believers the reply which they should make to the jeers of their enemies, and, although they should sally forth in crowds to defend their errors, enjoins the small number to stand firm against all their forces.

Who is there among them to declare this? We formerly said that foreknowledge and power belong to God alone; for he has all things under his eye, and governs all things according to his pleasure; and, accordingly, by these two arguments he formerly proved against all the false gods the charge of vanity. He now repeats the same charge, not to reclaim from this error the Gentiles, who did not read those prophecies, but to confirm the faith of the Jews, who were assured that they alone knew the true God. At present, indeed, this doctrine belongs both to Gentiles and to Jews; and not only so, but when the Jews shewed themselves to be unworthy, (Acts xiii. 46,) their privileges were extended to the Gentiles; but at that time Isaiah chiefly addressed the Jews, that, although they saw the Gentiles succeeding in everything to their wish, still they might abhor their idols and superstitions.

Let them produce their witnesses. After having summoned unbelievers to plead the cause of their gods, or rather, after having held it to be acknowledged that it was to no purpose that they spent their time in the worship of idols, because they had no power of predicting future events, he adds that there will be no *witnesses* to testify with truth that any prediction ever proceeded from false gods, and consequently that their cause is destitute of lawful defence. There never was a time, indeed, when there were not many fables told about idols, as we constantly hear of innumerable fables of that kind which are widely circulated, and the silliness with which unbelievers pour forth their lies is equalled by the obstinacy with which they defend them; but if we come to examine them, we shall find them to be supported by no proof, but to be absolute tricks and foolish inventions. On this account the Prophet willingly yields the victory, if they shall bring forward competent and trustworthy "witnesses."

To God alone, therefore, this glory belongs; for he has "witnesses."

But let them hear. At length, as if the matter had been fully proved, he rises more confidently, and commands the vanquished to keep silence. When he bids them *hear*, he means that the only obstacle to their acknowledgment of the truth is, that they are prejudiced by their error, and refuse to hear God; for this contempt causes them not to repent, but, on the contrary, to defend their error with stubbornness. Now, the Lord was ready to teach if they had only been willing to hear him with candour; and a better teacher could not be desired, but pride and haughtiness will not suffer them to see the truth or to listen to God. They are, therefore, without excuse; for they disdainfully reject his public instructions, and do not assent to his doctrine. Isaiah justly declares that, if they gave due attention, they would be constrained to acknowledge it to be true;[1] and indeed all who shall shew themselves to be obedient will readily acknowledge that the truth of God is founded on a firm and solid judgment, and not on an uncertain and doubtful opinion.

10. *Ye are my witnesses.* After having summoned the Gentiles to a contest, and after having proved that the stories which they circulated concerning their idols were false and unfounded, God now separates himself from the multitude of them, and produces his "witnesses," that he may not be thought to be of the same class with them. He justly boasts, therefore, that they are his witnesses, and that he has true witnesses; for the Jews had been instructed by heavenly oracles, as far as was necessary for attaining perfect certainty. Yet he indirectly reproaches them with ingratitude, if they do not openly declare that they know everything that is necessary for maintaining the glory of God; and, indeed, he calls them to bear witness, and adjures them not to cover with silence those predictions by which the true religion might be proved, because that would be unjustly to defraud a good cause of their support.

[1] "Qu'ils seroyent constrains de signer leur condamnation." "That they would be constrained to sign their condemnation."

And my servant. By the word "servant" some think that Isaiah is meant, but I prefer to take it collectively for all the prophets; for there is a change of number. Now, this name was peculiarly bestowed on the prophets, whom the Lord chose for the purpose of maintaining his truth; and yet, in making use of the singular number, there can be no doubt that he looked chiefly to Christ, in whom all the prophecies are contained and accomplished. (John i. 45; Acts iii. 24, and x. 43; Rom. i. 2, 3; Heb. i. 1.) It is also certain that by him chiefly, as the highest witness, all men are convinced. Yet we ought to observe God's design, which I formerly mentioned, to call the Jews to be witnesses, that he might accuse them of ingratitude, if they did not freely utter what is demanded by the faith of those who, after having received proofs so numerous and so remarkable, could not be ignorant of the power and goodness of God, or call them in question without the greatest treachery. At the same time, he shews in general that the Lord hath chosen the Church, in order to bear testimony to his truth; and on that ground Paul calls the Church "the pillar and foundation of truth." (1 Tim. iii. 15.)

It is therefore the duty of the Church to defend and publish the truth, that it may be honoured by posterity from age to age; not that the Lord needs this assistance, but because in this way he wishes to prove and establish its truth among men. Here Isaiah includes all believers, for this office of bearing testimony is binding on all, but especially on ministers, who ought to be standard-bearers, and to set an example before others. For this reason also they are particularly mentioned; but in general no man ought to be accounted a believer, who conceals the knowledge of God within his own heart, and never makes an open confession of the truth.

Therefore ye shall know. That it may not be thought that the Lord asks them to bear witness about what is unknown, he adds, "Ye shall know, ye shall believe, ye shall understand;" and by this order of the words he shews that faith goes before confession. If, therefore, confession proceed from the top of the lips, and not from the heart, it is vain and

useless, and is not such as the Lord demands or approves. Yet there is still some difficulty in the order of those words, "to know, to believe, to understand;" for we do not say that all who know believe, and, in the ordinary manner of speaking, where there is knowledge, there may not be faith. Besides, it is doubtful what is meant by "understanding," which is mentioned after faith, as if it differed from knowledge.

But in this passage the Prophet shews that there is a kind of preparation for faith, by which God procures reverence for his word, when he sees that it needs such assistance. The beginning of faith, indeed, is humility, by which we yield our senses as captives to God; but because we do not embrace the doctrine offered to us with such certainty as is needful, God confirms us by proofs, that we may fully believe. Thus John relates that he and Peter "believed the Scriptures," (John xx. 8,) when they beheld in the grave the tokens of Christ's resurrection; and in another passage he says that "the disciples believed in Christ," when that which they had heard from his mouth was accomplished. (John ii. 22.)

We may therefore sum it up in this manner. "The Jews shall actually feel it, when their faith shall have been aided by signs to worship the true God." At the same time, a distinction is made between true faith and that credulity which lightly carries away fickle men; and God always bestows on his elect knowledge and judgment, that they may distinguish truth from falsehood. Next follows faith and firm certainty, so that they embrace without hesitation all that the Lord hath spoken; and afterwards faith kindles in our hearts more and more the light of understanding, and even in proportion to the progress which we make in it, our knowledge grows and becomes brighter. But these things are not done by our own judgment, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, so far as we are enlightened by him.

That I am he. He means here that it is requisite, in order to faith, that we know who is our God, and that it is he whom we worship, and no other; that our minds may not foolishly waver, and go astray, and admit everything that shall be supported by the opinion of men. Thus, faith is

not that which frames anything according to its own fancy, or thoughtlessly assents to any assertion, or doubts and hesitates, but that which rests on firm certainty, so that, yielding obedience to the one true God, it surveys as from a lofty position, and despises, all false gods, and frees and delivers their minds from the dread of error.

Hence we see what we ought to think of the perplexed faith of Papists; for they think that men who are stupid and void of understanding, who can scarcely utter a syllable about God, whom they know not, or of whom they are uncertain, are believers, provided that they profess that they believe what their holy mother, the Church, believes. But the Lord does not approve of a thing so trivial, but has united faith with understanding, that we may not imagine that the one can be separated from the other. Besides, there is no faith, unless you believe that it is God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who spoke by the prophets and apostles; for it will not be faith, but a vain and wandering imagination, if we do not believe in that God.

Before me there was no God formed. In order to confirm still more what he lately said, that he is the only God, he again adds that "there was no other God before him." Yet לֹא נוצר (*lō nōtzăr*) may be taken in a passive sense, so as to convey a different meaning, that of a "creature," or "workmanship," or "work"[1] of God; but as that appears to be a forced sense, I willingly concur with the ordinary opinion, that "no other God had been formed before him." This contains a kind of irony, as if it had been said, that there was no other god that had not been made and formed by mortals, and consequently, that none can be compared with the eternal God.

[1] The translation which CALVIN mentions, but rejects, appears to be, "There was no creature of God."—*Ed.* "Various attempts have been made to explain away the singular expression, *there was no god formed before me*, as a solecism, or at least an inaccuracy of expression; whereas nothing else could have conveyed the writer's meaning in a form at once sarcastic, argumentative, and graphic. Instead of saying, in a bald prosaic form, 'All other gods are the work of men's hands, but I am uncreated and exist from all eternity,' he condenses all into the pregnant declaration, 'There was no god manufactured before me,' that is, 'All other gods were made, but none of them was made before I had a being.'" —*Alexander.*

And after me there shall not be. He adds that "there shall be none afterwards," because God always preserves his dominion entire and unimpaired, and does not fail through old age or length of days. His object is to shew that, until we rely on him, there is no faith in us. They who know that there is some deity, but do not understand what it is, continually hesitate, and entangle themselves in strange labyrinths. Let us, therefore, believe that he alone is God, and for that reason cannot permit any one to be equal to him, or to share with him in his majesty.

11. *I, I*[1] *am Jehovah.* Here the Lord employs lofty language, as having obtained the victory. Already he had sufficiently explained in what manner he must be known, and had shewn that there is no God except himself; and now, in order to confirm this doctrine, he exclaims, "I alone am Jehovah, there is none besides me." This shews how dangerous it is to contrive anything about God out of our own fancy; for when we make any kind of graven image, we produce an idol instead of God. We ought, therefore, to embrace nothing but what has proceeded from God, so as not to allow ourselves any liberty on this subject. After God has revealed himself to us, we ought to make progress in the knowledge of him, and to grow and be strengthened every day; for this is the meaning of the repetition, *I, I.*[1]

And there is no Saviour besides me. That we may not suppose that his eternal essence only is here exhibited, but also his power and goodness, which he constantly exercises towards us, and by which he is fully revealed, he adds an epithet as a distinguishing mark, that "he is the only Saviour." The world falls into the mistake of giving a naked and empty name to God, and at the same time conveying his authority to another, as in Popery God is indeed mentioned, but is robbed of his honour, when one part of it is given to St. Peter, and another to St. Paul, and another to St. William, and another to St. George; that is, his offices are distributed into so many parts, that hardly anything is left to him but a naked and empty name. They boast, indeed, of worshipping God alone; but when we come to what

[1] "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I."

it belongs to God to do, they make as many gods as they have creatures, and distribute among them his power and authority. But the Lord has determined that these shall remain entire and uninfringed, and they cannot be conveyed to another without shocking blasphemy; for he alone does good to men, he alone defends and preserves them. The last clause of the verse expresses that knowledge which is derived from experience, that we may not seek salvation in any other than in him who is the only author of it. Hence we learn that the chief part of the worship of God consists in faith, when he is acknowledged to be the beginning and the end of life, when we bestow on him the title of Saviour, and do not convey to another what he declares to belong to himself and to reside in him alone.

12. *I have told and have saved.* This verse is a sort of recapitulation (*ἀνακεφαλαίωσις*) of the preceding; for Jehovah again relates that he foretold future events, and that he had actually accomplished what he foretold. To *tell* relates to foreknowledge, and to *save* relates to power and goodness. In a word, he means that he alone is God, who both knows and does all things. Although these things were spoken to the Jews, yet let us know that they belong to us also; for all the predictions that have come down to us ought to be regarded by us as so many proofs both of the knowledge and of the power of God, that we may rely on him alone.

And there is no strange god among you. That superstitions may be banished, and that he may be elevated to the throne of his heavenly doctrine, he again mentions that he displayed his power, and gave tokens of his grace, without being aided by any one; and hence it follows, that they who shall not be satisfied with him alone, will be excessively ungrateful and wicked. "At the time," says he, "when ye worshipped no strange god, I openly and publicly displayed my power; and therefore it is unlawful to bestow on false gods what belongs to me." And yet in these words he does not so much commend the piety or religion of the people, as he excludes all foreign aid; as if he had said, that while the Jews knew no other God, the miracles wrought by him

were so numerous and so great, that it was perfectly evident that none but he is God. At the same time Isaiah remarks that our unbelief hinders God from displaying his power amongst us. Away, then, with all errors and all wavering and doubtful opinions about God, if we wish to have experience of his power! for if we turn our minds to superstitions or idols, we shall undoubtedly render ourselves unworthy of his assistance and kindness.

Ye are therefore my witnesses. At length he again summons them as *witnesses*, accusing them of base and shameful ingratitude, if they conceal what he had abundantly made known to them; for the greater and more numerous the testimonies by which he has manifested to us his power and might, so much the more are we bound to declare them to others.

13. *Even before the day was.* He now speaks of the eternity of God; but we must attend to the Prophet's design; for he who has a beginning and is not from himself, cannot rule by his dominion, or govern according to his pleasure, what he has not created. When, therefore, God declares that he is eternal, he reminds us that the world is his workmanship; for this order of nature did not spring up by chance, but proceeded from the wonderful purpose and wisdom of God. (Gen. i. 1.) In this sense he afterwards adds,—

There is none to deliver out of my hand. Hence we shall clearly see that his supreme and infinite power is proved from his eternity; for if he were not eternal, he could neither exercise authority over all things, nor be the defender of his people, nor dispose of the creatures according to his pleasure; but since he is eternal, all things must be subject to his authority. To the same purpose is what he says, that no obstacle can prevent what he hath decreed to do, that the Jews may not be alarmed or dispirited by the forces or number of the enemies.

14. *Thus saith Jehovah.* The Prophet shews that Cyrus will be but a hired soldier, to render his services to the Lord for delivering his people. He does not indeed name Cyrus, but speaks of the army which he has under his command for subduing the Babylonians. We know that this was accomplished by Cyrus and Darius, and that under the direction

of God, who had foretold it long before. And not only does he speak to those who beheld the accomplishment of these things, but to all others whom the Lord wished to comfort by this hope of deliverance, of which they could not have formed the smallest conception. He addresses captives, who, having been oppressed by the cruel tyranny of the Babylonians, appeared to be beyond all hope of obtaining deliverance, and who might be apt to regard those promises as absurd, because in the opinion of men there was no visible hope of redemption. But we should yield this honour to the word, to believe what is otherwise incredible, that we may be encouraged to "hope against hope." (Rom. iv. 18.) Such is the power of faith, that it must not be limited to the view of external objects, but rise above the heavens, and reach even to God himself.

For your sake I have sent to Babylon. This is highly emphatic; for, while Cyrus was instigated by ambition and by an insatiable desire of power, and while there were many causes of the war, nothing was further from being generally believed, than that the destruction of that monarchy would shake the world, so that the Jews who were at that time most despicable in the eyes of men, would return to their native land. But God testifies that he will grant easy victories to the Persians, so that they shall subdue the East, because he will be reconciled to his Church.

For the same reason he begins by saying, that he is *the Redeemer of his people,* and *the Holy One,* to shew more clearly that he holds dear and precious those whom he has chosen to be his peculiar people. (Exod. xix. 6.) But this appears to be inconsistent with what we have formerly seen, "Wo to thee who plunderest, for thou shalt be exposed to plunder," (Isaiah xxxiii. 1;) for the Lord declared that he would punish the cruelty of the Babylonians, and repay to them what they had deserved; but now he affirms that he sends the Persians to deliver his people. But these statements may easily be reconciled. Though the Lord punished the Babylonians, yet he had also a care of his people; for, as the providence of God extends throughout the whole world, so he takes a peculiar care of his

Church, and, as the elect are the object of his special love, so he directs all things for their salvation. It is not without good reason, therefore, that he says that he sent, and that he was induced by undeserved favour to send, because he wished to be the Saviour of his people.

And I made them come down. For the same reason as before, he now adds that they shall come down at his command, because, although the Persians and Medes will have another object in view, yet their march shall be guided by heavenly impulse; and in this manner he wished to give an early testimony of his grace to the elect people, that they might not faint under many very distressing calamities. This promise ought therefore to have brought vast consolation to believers, that, although they were despised, and hated, and even abhorred by all, still they were dear to God; because he would at length assist them, and on their account would destroy the kingdom of the Babylonians.

They are all fugitives.[1] By saying that "they shall be fugitives," he shews that he will give to Cyrus such success, that the Babylonians shall tremble at his arrival, and in terror shall throw down their arms, and betake themselves to flight. It often happens that a very powerful prince, abundantly supplied with military preparations, undertakes a war, but conducts it unsuccessfully; and therefore it was not enough that Cyrus should be sent with a powerful army, if he were not also crowned with success.

And a cry of the Babylonians in the ships. To describe more fully the sudden flight, he adds that there shall be "*a cry* or noise in the ships;" for they were unable to escape by land. They had, indeed, a very convenient river, the Euphrates, which united with the river Tigris, by which they might easily have escaped. Yet even in this respect their expectation was disappointed on account of the bed of the river being dried up.

15. *I Jehovah.* This verse contains no statement, and only shews who it is that speaks, how great is his power and

[1] "All their nobles, (Heb., bars.)"—Eng. Ver. "From the earliest times ברחים (*bārīchīm*) has received a twofold explanation, namely, that of Fugitives, as in the Septuagint, and that of Bars, as in the Vulgate. The same question arises in the exposition of chap. xv. 5."—*Alexander.*

majesty, and, in a word, how warmly he loves the elect people, so as to give greater weight to the former promise. In short, it may be viewed as the seal of the preceding statement, more powerfully confirming what was formerly said, that it is God who makes these promises. But what God?

Your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. He is called *Holy*, because he has chosen and separated a people, that he might consecrate them to himself; for by this title he reminds them of the adoption by which he united them to himself in a peculiar manner, that they may understand that he will be their Father and Saviour. And for the same reason we ought now to acknowledge him as our Holy One, because he has set us apart to be members of the Church, of which we are assured by our calling. The name *Creator* must not be viewed as referring to universal creation, by which unbelievers also are created, but to the new creation, on account of which we are also called (Eph. ii. 10) "his workmanship," (τὸ ποίημα,) as we have formerly stated, while expounding other passages.[1]

Your King. This might indeed be thought to be absurd; for not even the semblance of a kingdom was visible, and nothing was to be seen among the Jews but what was covered with shame and disgrace, in consequence of their having been deprived of all aid and relief. Yet there was room for the exercise of faith, that they might hope for the restoration of the kingdom, though apparently ruined and almost extinguished, and might acknowledge God to be their King.

16. *Thus saith Jehovah.* He again repeats and confirms what was otherwise incredible; and, in order that this confirmation may have greater weight, he personates God himself.

Who maketh a way in the sea. He reminds them of former benefits, that, having experienced his power and kindness, they may believe that he will not be less gracious for the future, nor less powerful to deliver them. As if he had said, "The Lord who speaks will actually shew how vast is the greatness of his power. Your fathers experienced it, and

[1] See page 318, n. 1.

you will not experience it the less." Now, we are ungrateful to God, if former benefits do not lead us to entertain hope for the future; and especially when he intended to give a sure and striking proof of continual favour towards us. He brought the Jews out of Egypt on the express condition, that the deliverance which was accomplished should never be forgotten. (Exod. xiii. 9.)

The Prophet therefore represents God as actually present, and declares that he is the same God who surmounted every obstacle by his power, that he might be the Redeemer of his people. At that time he opened up a way through the sea, (Exod. xiv. 21,) and afterwards *through the mighty waters*, that is, through Jordan, which the Lord dried up, though it was running very rapidly. (Josh. iii. 16.) And these prodigious miracles he expressly relates, because they might think that their return to Judea was closed up, and that all that was promised concerning it was fabulous.

17. *When he bringeth out.* He shews that no power or forces shall hinder him from delivering his people, whenever he shall think proper. The sea which lay between them could not prevent God from "bringing out" his people; but he divided its waters in the midst, and drowned the pursuing enemies, with their horses and chariots. (Exod. xiv. 28.) This is therefore an amplification; as if he had said, "Though the whole world be leagued for your destruction, and attempt to hinder the deliverance of my Church, yet it will gain nothing; for not only will the Lord find out a way through whirlpools, when he thinks proper, but he will overthrow and scatter all opposing efforts, and will crush them so that they shall never again raise their head."

They are quenched like flax. It is possible that he who was vanquished in one battle may renew his strength in another, and at length be victorious; but here the Lord promises a continual victory, for he declares that the enemies shall be subdued in such a manner that they shall be completely extinguished. By the metaphor of *flax*, he expresses more vividly the sudden destruction of the enemies; for *flax* may indeed burn and give light, but is immediately consumed.

18. *Remember not former things.* Hitherto the Prophet

shewed how great was the power of God in delivering the people. He now declares that all the miracles which God wrought in that first redemption were of little importance as compared with the more remarkable miracle which should soon be wrought; that is, that the glory of this second deliverance shall be so great as to throw the former into the shade. Yet he does not mean that the Jews should forget so great a benefit, which he had commanded them to publish in every age, and to inscribe on permanent records; for in his preface to the Law he begins in this manner, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exod. xx. 2.) He even enjoined parents to repeat it frequently to their children, and from hand to hand to deliver it to their grandchildren and to posterity. This must therefore be understood to be by comparison, like that saying of Jeremiah, "Behold the days come," saith the Lord, "that it shall no longer be said, The Lord liveth, who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, who led and brought out the seed of the house of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the countries into which I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their land." (Jer. xxiii. 7, 8.) In short, he shews that this latter redemption, when compared with the former, shall be far more illustrious. Hence it follows, that it is improper to limit this prediction to a small number of years; for the Prophet does not separate between its commencement and its progress, but extends the blessed consequences of their return till Christ, who, by his coming, actually set up the priesthood and the kingdom.

19. *Behold, I do a new thing.* This shews more clearly what the Prophet meant in the preceding verse, for he declares that there shall be "a new work," that is, a work unheard of and uncommon, and which, on account of its greatness and excellence, shall throw into the shade the reputation of all other works; in the same manner as the brightness of the sun, when it fills heaven and earth, causes the stars to disappear.

Now it shall arise. He means that the time shall not be long. Yet these things were not so speedily accomplished;

but, if we look to God, four hundred or even a thousand years are counted as a moment before him; how much less ought a delay of seventy years to wear out and discourage them? When he adds, *Shall ye not know it?* this question is more forcible and impressive than a bare affirmation, and this form of question is more frequently employed by Hebrew writers than in the Greek and Latin languages. When he promises *a way in the wilderness,* he alludes to that wilderness which lay between Judea and Babylon; for he speaks of the return of the people. Accordingly, to the *way* he adds *rivers;* for in travelling through a dry country they might have been parched and died of thirst. On this account, the Lord says that he will supply them with water and everything that is necessary for the journey; as if he had said, "I will furnish you with provisions, so that under my guidance you shall return to your native land."

But it may be thought that the Prophet is excessive, and that his language is altogether hyperbolical, when he extols this deliverance in such lofty terms; for we read that rivers were turned into blood, (Exod. vii. 20,) the air was covered with darkness, (Exod. x. 22,) the first-born were slain, (Exod. xii. 29,) insects were sent forth to destroy the whole country, (Exod. x. 15,) and that other prodigies of the same kind happened in Egypt, while nothing of this sort was done in Babylon. What then is meant by this new redemption? This consideration has compelled almost all Christian commentators to interpret this passage as referring absolutely to the coming of Christ, in which they are undoubtedly mistaken; and the Jews are also in the wrong, when they limit it to the redemption from Babylon. Accordingly, as I have frequently remarked, we ought here to include the whole period which followed the redemption from Babylon, down to the coming of Christ.

The redemption from Egypt may be regarded as having been the first birth of the Church; because the people were gathered into a body, and the Church was established, of which formerly there was not the semblance; but that deliverance is not limited to the time when the people went out of Egypt, but is continued down to the possession of the

land of Canaan, which was delivered to the people, when the kings had been driven out. (Josh. xi. 23.) We ought to take the same view of this new birth, (περὶ ταύτης παλιγγενεσίας,) by which the people were rescued from Babylon, and brought back to their native land; for that restoration must not be limited to the departure from Babylon, but must be extended to Christ, during the whole of which period great and wonderful events undoubtedly happened. Was it not astonishing that a captive people, whom all despised as some contemptible slave, and who were even held to be accursed, should receive freedom and liberty to return from heathen kings; and not only so, but should be furnished with provisions, and with everything else that was necessary both for the journey and for settling at home, for rearing the city and for rebuilding the Temple? (Ezra i. 2.)

But far greater events followed, when but a few persons were willing to return, and the greater part were so discouraged as to prefer wretched bondage to blessed freedom. When, in comparison of that vast multitude which had been carried away, a few persons returned to Judea, still greater obstacles arose. Conspiracies were formed, the people formerly abhorred became the objects of keener resentments, the work was interrupted, and every method was tried for putting a full stop to the design. (Ezra iv.) Thus it appeared as if in vain the Lord had brought them back, for they were exposed to dangers much greater than before. When the temple had been built, they did not enjoy greater peace; for they were hedged in on all sides by very cruel and deadly enemies, from whom they often sustained great hardships. They were afterwards afflicted by distresses, and calamities, and various persecutions, so that they were supposed to be struck down and overwhelmed, and utterly ruined. And yet, in the midst of fire and sword, God wonderfully preserved them; and if we consider their wretched and miserable condition, and the grievous persecutions of tyrants, we shall wonder that even a single individual of them could survive.

In order that we may understand how great was the excellence of this latter redemption, and how far it excelled the former, we must continue and bring it down to the time

of Christ, who at length gave an immense addition to the former benefits. Thus, beyond all question, the second redemption leaves the first far behind. There is nothing forced in this interpretation, and it corresponds to the ordinary language of the prophets, who always have the Messiah for their end, and keep him constantly in their eye. But this will appear more clearly from what is related by Haggai; for, when the Temple began to be rebuilt, the old men, who had seen the glory of the ancient temple, mourned, and were not far from thinking that God had forsaken them, and that his promises had failed. But Haggai, in order to comfort them, and to prove that the glory of this second would be greater than the glory of the first, though the structure of the building was far inferior, leads them to the Redeemer. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts," says he, "Yet once, and within a short time, I will shake the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and the continent, and all the nations; and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former." (Hagg. ii. 6-9.) Thus, as Haggai brings the restoration of the Temple down to Christ, and refers to him its true glory; so this deliverance (for the two things are connected, or rather they are the same) extended even to Christ. Consequently, we need not wonder if it surpassed the Egyptian deliverance in every respect.

20. *The beast of the field shall honour me.* He adorns the preceding statement; for, amidst such a desperate condition of affairs, it was proper that magnificent language should be employed in extolling the power of God, that words might supply what seemed to be wanting in the reality. The meaning is, that the power of God will be so visible and manifest, that the very beasts, impressed with the feeling of it, shall acknowledge and worship God. This prediction corresponds to the song, "The sea saw and fled, Jordan was driven back. The mountains leaped like rams, and the hills like lambs. At the face of the Lord the earth trembled." (Psalm cxiv. 3, 4, 7.) Isaiah here ascribes the same feeling

to brute animals, because by a secret impulse they shall be constrained to retire, so as to allow his people to pass safely. And yet the cause assigned is more extensive, that they will stand still, as if in astonishment, when they see the miracles. In a word, God declares that he will not suffer his people, in their journey homeward, to be destitute of the means of subsistence, but describes in exaggerated language his love toward the Jews, that by the height of their hope they may rise above the world. When we hear these statements, let us also not measure the power of God by the nature of things, but let us be exalted by faith above all that can be seen or known.

My people, my chosen. That these wretched exiles may not be driven from the hope of heavenly grace and assistance, he reminds them of their adoption; as if he had said, that amidst this ruinous and melancholy condition they still continued to be the people of God, because he who once *chose* them does not change his purpose. Accordingly, whenever we need to be excited to cherish favourable hope, let us remember God's calling; for, although we are unworthy, still it ought to be reckoned enough that the Lord has deigned to bestow on us so great an honour.

21. *This people have I created for myself.* The Prophet means that the Lord will necessarily do what he formerly said, because it concerns his glory to preserve the people whom he has chosen for himself; and therefore these words are intended for the consolation of the people. "Do you think that I will suffer my glory to fall to the ground? It is connected with your salvation, and therefore your salvation shall be the object of my care. In a word, know that you shall be saved, because you cannot perish, unless my glory likewise perish. Ye shall therefore survive, because I wish that you may continually proclaim my glory."

When he says that he has *created* the people, let us learn that it proceeds from supernatural grace that we are the people of God; for we must remember that principle of which we have formerly spoken, that he does not now speak of the ordinary nature of men, but of spiritual regeneration, or of the adoption by which he separates the Church from the rest of the world, and that with everything that

belongs to it. Let no one therefore ascribe his regeneration to himself or to any human merits; but let us acknowledge that it is entirely to the mercy of God that we owe so great a favour.

They shall declare my praise. Though it is the design of the Prophet to shew what I have said, that his people shall be saved because it concerns the glory of God, yet we also learn from it, that the end of our election is, that we may shew forth the glory of God in every possible way. (Exod. xiv. 4, 17, 18.) The reprobate are, indeed, the instruments of the glory of God, but it is said to shine in us in a very different manner; for "he hath chosen us," says Paul, "that we might be holy and without blame before him through love, who predestinated us that he might adopt us to be his children through Jesus Christ, in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace by which he hath made us accepted through the Beloved." (Eph. i. 4-6.) Such also is the import of the words of Peter when he says, that we were brought out of darkness into the wonderful kingdom of God, that we may declare his perfections, (1 Pet. ii. 9;) and likewise the words of Zacharias, "That, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life." (Luke i. 74, 75.) This, then, is the end of our calling, that, being consecrated to God, we may praise and honour him during our whole life.

22. *And thou hast not called on me.* He confirms by an indirect reproof what he said in the preceding verse, that it was not by any merits of his people that he was induced to act so kindly towards them. This deliverance, therefore, ought to be ascribed to no other cause than to the goodness of God. In order to prove this, he says, "Thou hast not called on me." *Calling on* the name of God includes the whole of the worship of God, the chief part of which is "calling upon him;" and, therefore, following the ordinary manner of Scripture, he has put a part for the whole. But in other passages the Lord plainly shews that calling upon him is the chief part of his worship; for, after having said that he despises sacrifices and outward ceremonies, he adds,

"Call upon me in the day of trouble." (Psalm l. 15.) Hence also Scripture, when it speaks of the worship of God, chiefly mentions "calling on him;" for when Moses states that the worship of God had been restored, he says, "Then began men to call on the name of the Lord." (Gen. iv. 26.)

But thou hast been wearied of me. In this second clause I consider the particle כִּי (*kī*) to be disjunctive, "But rather thou hast been wearied of me." Others render it "Because thou hast wearied;" as if he had said, "Thou hast received with dislike what was enjoined on thee;" which amounts to nearly the same thing. As the Lord demands obedience, so he wishes all that worship him to be ready and cheerful; as Paul testifies, that "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver," (2 Cor. ix. 7,) and they who obey reluctantly cannot be called, and are not reckoned by him, true and sincere worshippers. Thus, in order to shew that the Jews have not worshipped him as they ought to have done, he says that they did it reluctantly. If any one choose rather to view it as assigning the reason, and render it thus,—"Thou hast not called on me, *for* thou hast rendered to me no worship without regret, and what may be said to have been extorted from thee by violence," as it makes little difference in the meaning, I do not greatly object; but the translation which I have given appears to convey more clearly what the Prophet intends. Besides, the contrast contains within itself the assigning of a reason; and therefore, if we wish that God should accept of our service, let us obey him with a cheerful disposition.

23. *Thou hast not brought to me.* A question arises, "Why does the Prophet bring this reproach against the Jews, who, it is evident, were very careful to offer sacrifices according to the injunction of the Law?" Some refer this to the time of the captivity, when they could not have offered sacrifices to God though they had been willing to do so; for it was not lawful for them to offer sacrifices in any other place than Jerusalem, and therefore they could not appease God by sacrifices. (Deut. xii. 13.) But I rather think that it is a general reproach; for at the very time when the people were sacrificing, they could not boast of their merits

or personal worth, as if they had laid God under obligations in this manner; for they were wanting in the sacrifices which God chiefly approves, that is, faith and obedience, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. There was no integrity of heart, "their hands were full of blood," (Isaiah i. 15;) everything was filled with fraud and robbery, and there was no room for justice or equity. Although, therefore, they daily brought beasts to the temple, and sacrificed them, yet he justly affirms that they offered nothing to him. Sacrifices could not be accepted by God when they were separated from truth, and were offered to another rather than to God; for he did not demand them in themselves, but so far as the people treated them as exercises of faith and obedience. Hence we infer that the Prophet says nothing new, but continues to exhibit the same doctrine, namely, that God rejects all services that are rendered in a slavish spirit, or in any other respect are defective.

24. *Thou hast not bought cane for me.* He means the *cane* or *calamus* of which the precious ointment was composed, as we are informed, (Exod. xxx. 23;) for the high priests, the tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, together with its vessels, were anointed with it. He says, therefore, "Although thou buy cane for me with money, yet thou oughtest not to reckon that to be expense bestowed on me, as if I approved of it." They lost their pains in all those ceremonies, because they did not look to the proper end, since they did not exercise faith, or worship God with a pure conscience.

And thou hast not made me drunk. This corresponds to a mode of expression employed in the law, in which God testifies that sacrifices are pleasant and delightful feasts to him; not that he took pleasure in the slaughter of animals, but that by these exercises he wished to lead his people to true obedience. He means that here, on the contrary, the people did not offer sacrifices in a proper manner, because they polluted everything with impiety; and, consequently, that he might be said to be hungry and faint, because they offered nothing in a right manner, but everything was corrupted and was without savour.

But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins. The Prophet now aggravates the heinousness of that offence, by saying that the people not only were deficient in their duty, and did not submit to God, but that they even endeavoured to make God submit to them, and "to serve" their will, or rather their lust. They who explain this passage as referring to Christ torture the Prophet's meaning, and therefore I consider this interpretation to be more natural. The Lord complains that men compelled him to carry a heavy burden, instead of submitting to him with reverence, as they ought to have done; for when we rise up against God, we treat him as a slave by our rebellion and insolence. He explains this more fully when he says, *Ye have wearied me;* that is, that God suffered much uneasiness on account of the wickedness of his people; for in some respects we wound and "pierce him," as the Prophet says, (Zech. xii. 10,) when we reject his voice, and do not suffer ourselves to be governed by him. Apparently he alludes to what he had formerly said about the weariness or uneasiness of the people in worshipping God; for God declares, on the contrary, that the people have given him great distress.

25. *I, I am he.*[1] He concludes the former statement by this exclamation, as if he had said, that he may boast of his right, that he blots out the iniquities of his people, and restores them to freedom; for they have no merits by which they could obtain it, since they deserve the severest punishment, and even destruction. The same word is twice repeated by him, that he may more sharply rebuke the ingratitude of men who are wont to rob him of that honour which belongs to him alone, or in some way to throw it into the shade.

He that blotteth out thy iniquities. הוּא (*hū*) is the demonstrative pronoun *He*, used instead of a noun, as in many other passages. It is but a poor and feeble meaning that is attached to the words of the Prophet by those who think that God claims for himself the privilege and authority of pardoning sins, for he rather contrasts his mercy with all other causes, as if he declared that he is not induced by anything else to

[1] "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I."

pardon sins, but is satisfied with his mere goodness, and, consequently, that it is wrong to ascribe either to merits or to any sacrifices the redemption of which he is the Author by free grace. The meaning may be summed up by saying, that the people ought to hope for their return for no other reason than because God will freely pardon their sins, and, being of his own accord appeased by his mercy, will stretch out his fatherly hand.

The present subject is the pardon of sins; we must see on what occasion it has been introduced. Undoubtedly the Prophet means that there will be a freely bestowed redemption, and therefore he mentions forgiveness rather than redemption, because, since they had received a severe punishment for their sins, they must have been pardoned before they were delivered. The cause of the disease must be taken away, if we wish to cure the disease itself; and so long as the Lord's anger lasts, his chastisements will also last; and consequently his anger must be appeased, and we must be reconciled to God, before we are freed from punishments. And this form of expression ought to be carefully observed in opposition to the childish distinction of the Sophists, who say that God does indeed pardon guilt, but that we must make satisfaction by penances. Hence proceeded satisfactions, indulgences, purgatory, and innumerable other contrivances.

The Prophet does not only speak of guilt, but speaks expressly of punishment which is remitted, because sins have been freely pardoned. This is still more clearly expressed by the addition of the phrase *for mine own sake.* It is certain that this limitation is contrasted with all merits, that is, that God pays no regard to us, or to anything that is in us, in pardoning our sins, but that he is prompted to it solely by his goodness; for if he had regard to us, he would be in some respects our debtor, and forgiveness would not be of free grace. Accordingly, Ezekiel explains the contrast, "Not for your sakes will I do this, O house of Jacob, but for mine own sake." (Ezek. xxxvi. 22.) Hence it follows that God is his own adviser, and is freely inclined to pardon sins, for he does not find any cause in men.

Therefore I will not remember thy sins. The Prophet added

this for the consolation of the godly, who, oppressed by the consciousness of their transgressions, might otherwise have fallen into despair. On this account he encourages them to cherish good hope, and confirms them in that confidence by saying, that although they are unworthy, yet he will pardon their sins, and will thus deliver them. Hence we ought to draw a useful doctrine, that no one can be certain of obtaining pardon, unless he rely on the absolute goodness of God. They who look to their works must continually hesitate, and at length despair, because, if they are not deceived by gross hypocrisy, they will always have before their eyes their own unworthiness, which will constrain them to remain in doubt as to the love of God.

When it is said that ministers also forgive sins, (John xx. 23,) there is no inconsistency with this passage, for they are witnesses of this freely bestowed forgiveness. The ordinary distinction is, that God forgives sins by his power, and ministers by their office; but as this distinction does not explain the Prophet's meaning, we must keep by what I have stated, that God not only forgives sins in the exercise of his authority, but that all the blessings for which we ought to hope flow from the fountain of his absolute bounty. Thus the Lord adorned the preaching of the gospel, and its ministers, in such a manner as to reserve the full authority for himself.

26. *Bring to my remembrance.* Because the pride of men cannot be easily corrected, the Lord pursues this argument, and dwells much upon it, in order to lead the Jews to throw away all confidence in their works, and to make them more humble. He gives them liberty to say and argue whatever they please, in order to support their cause, if they do not acknowledge that they are vanquished. By a sort of admission in their favour, he bids them call to his remembrance; as if he had said, "If thou thinkest me to be forgetful, tell it thyself; remind me, if thou canst allege anything good; speak in thy turn, I shall be silent." By this form of expression he taunts men more than if he had stated in the usual way how the matter stood. He shews that it is exceedingly foolish in men to claim anything for themselves; for, though he gives them liberty of boasting, they will be

found utterly unable to plead, and will have nothing to say in defence of their cause.

That thou mayest be justified, that is, "In order that thou mayest gain thy cause, and carry off the victory, I allow thee to say whatever thou pleasest." This is vehement mockery, which shuts the mouths of men more completely than if he pronounced the sentence in his own person and with the authority of a judge. Yet we must also observe the design of the Prophet; for he found it necessary to strip the Jews of the mask of personal worth, that they might humbly and meekly receive the grace of God.

27. *Thy first father sinned.* This passage is almost universally understood to refer to the "first parent" Adam. (Gen. iii. 6.) Some prefer to interpret it as relating to Abraham; as if he had said, "You have not alone sinned, but your father Abraham himself sinned, though he was a man of eminent holiness."[1] (Josh. xxiv. 2.) By the *teachers* are understood to be meant Moses and Aaron, who were men of extraordinary holiness, and yet sinned: "how much more you who are far inferior to them?" (Numb. xx. 12.) That would be an argument from the greater to the less. But I view the matter differently; for under the word *Father* he includes not one or a few of their ancestors, but many. It is an interchange of the singular and plural number, which is very frequently employed by Hebrew writers. This reproof occurs very frequently in the prophets and in the Psalms; for, knowing that God reckoned them to be "a holy people," (Exod. xix. 6,) as if this honour had been due to the excellence or merits of the fathers, they rose fiercely against God himself, and swelled with pride on account of their hereditary privilege. On this account the prophets in every age expose the crimes of the fathers; and Stephen, who followed them, says, that "they always resisted the Holy Spirit;" (Acts vii. 51;) as if he had said, "You do not now

[1] Jarchi adopts this view, and paraphrases the clause thus: "'Thy first father sinned,' that is, when he said, 'How shall I know that I shall inherit it?'" (Gen. xv. 8.) This passage was not likely to have occurred to modern readers as the most striking fact in Abraham's history for proving that that eminently holy man was not absolutely perfect; and the selection of it is a curious specimen of Jewish interpretation.—*Ed.*

for the first time begin to be wicked; long ago your fathers were base and infamous. From a bad crow has come a bad egg. But you are far worse, and exceed your fathers in wickedness; so that if I had looked at you alone, you would long ago have been destroyed and completely ruined."

And thy teachers.[1] He now adds the teachers, in order to shew that the blame did not lie with the people alone; for they who ought to have been the guides of others, that is, the priests and the prophets, were the first to stumble, and led others into error. In a word, he shews that no class was free from vices and corruptions. "Let them now go and boast of their virtues, and let them produce the very smallest reason why I ought to protect them, except my own goodness." If it be objected that there is no reason why the sins of their fathers should be brought as an accusation against them, because it is written, "The soul that hath sinned shall die, and the children shall not be punished instead of the fathers," (Ezek. xviii. 20,) the answer will be easy. The Lord makes the children to bear the punishment of the sins of the fathers, when they resemble their fathers; and yet they are not punished for other men's sins, for they themselves have sinned; and when the Lord chastises the whole body, he puts the fathers and the children together, so as to involve all in the same condemnation.

28. *Therefore I will pollute.* The copulative ו (*vau*) here means *therefore*, and the preterite tense, *I have polluted*, ought to have a future signification, though it may also be rendered in the past tense; but I have preferred the future, in order to apply it to the time of the captivity; for he directly addresses those who were to live under the captivity. If it be thought preferable to extend it to various calamities, by which God had covered his people with disgrace, and at the same time to connect with it their exile in Babylon, there will be no impropriety; and indeed it will be more appro-

[1] "Thy teachers. Heb. Interpreters."—(Eng. Ver.) "Interpreters, or organs of communication, is a title given elsewhere to ambassadors, (2 Chron. xxxi. 31,) and to an interceding angel. (Job xxxiii. 23.) It here denotes all those who, under the theocracy, acted as organs of communication between God and the people, whether prophets, priests, or rulers."—*Alexander.*

priate to view it as a description of what frequently happened to them in former times, that they may be warned for the future, that they have no privilege which can defend them from receiving again with the deepest disgrace the punishment of their ingratitude. He shews, therefore, the cause of this destruction. It was because the transgressions of the fathers and of the children must be punished, that is, when there was no end of sinning, but when they daily kindled the wrath of God against them, till he at length punished them.

The Lord is said to "pollute" or "profane" his Church, when he despises and throws it aside as a thing of no value. In this sense the word is used in Psalm lxxxix. 39, and in many other passages. Having been set apart and sanctified by him, we dwell under his protection and guardianship, so long as we are holy; and in like manner when we are deprived of it, we are said to be "profaned," because we cease to be sacred, and are rendered unworthy of his protection; and he exposes as a prey to enemies those whom he formerly called "his anointed," and forbade men to "touch." (Psalm cv. 15.) But it may be thought strange that the priests, who were Christ's representatives, should be "profaned;" and the reason is, that they transgressed, while they ought to have been "teachers" of others.

And I will make Jacob a curse. The Hebrew word חרם, (*herem,*) which we have translated *a curse*, signifies "destruction," but likewise signifies "a curse;" and I have thought that the latter meaning is more appropriate to this passage, for it afterwards follows, *a reproach.* These statements are borrowed by the Prophet from Moses, whose description he follows so closely, that it is easy to perceive the style of Moses in these words, and to see that the prophets bring forward nothing that is new or strange. The words of Moses are: "And thou shalt be an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all the nations to which the Lord shall lead thee." (Deut. xxviii. 37.) He therefore threatens that he will afflict the people in such a manner as to make them "accursed" by all; so that whoever shall wish to pronounce a "curse" may take it for an example, and that it may be a

form of " cursing ;" that he will expose them to the ridicule of men, so that they shall serve as a proverb in the mouth of all who wish to utter scorn ; just as at the present day we see that the name of a Jew, though in itself honourable, is in the highest degree ignominious and disgraceful. The Lord pronounced those dreadful threatenings by Isaiah, that they might know that a punishment sufficiently severe, as compared with the enormity of their transgressions, could not be inflicted ; that when the Lord should chastise them, they might not complain that the punishments which they endured were too severe, or think that the Prophet's reproofs were too sharp.

CHAPTER XLIV.

1. Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:

2. Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

3. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

4. And they shall spring up *as* among the grass, as willows by the water-courses.

5. One shall say, I *am* the Lord's; and another shall call *himself* by the name of Jacob: and another shall subscribe *with* his hand unto the Lord, and surname *himself* by the name of Israel.

6. Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and besides me *there is* no God.

7. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the an-

1. Nunc tamen audi, Iacob, serve meus, et Israel quem elegi.

2. Sic dicit Iehova factor tuus, et formator tuus ab utero; tibi auxiliabitur. Ne timeas, serve meus, Iacob, dilecte quem elegi.

3. Quia effundam aquas super sitientem, et flumina super aridam. Effundam spiritum meum super semen tuum, et benedictionem meam super germina tua.

4. Et germinabunt quasi inter herbam, quasi salices juxta rivos aquarum.

5. Hic dicet, Ego sum Iehovæ; et ille vocabitur nomine Iacob; alius scribet manu sua, Iehovæ (sum), et nomine Israel cognominabitur.

6. Sic dicit Iehova, rex Israel, et redemptor ejus, Iehova exercituum: Ego primus, et idem novissimus, et præter me non est Deus.

7. Et quis sicut ego vocabit, annunciabit hoc, et ordinabit hoc mihi, ex quo constitui populum seculi?

cient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

8. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it?* ye *are* even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*.

9. They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses: they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.

10. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image *that is* profitable for nothing?

11. Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed; and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together.

12. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint.

13. The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule, he marketh it out with a line, he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

14. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*.

15. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it:* he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.

16. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satis-

Et quæ pendent, et quæ ventura sunt, illis annuncient.

8. Ne timeatis et ne terreamini. An non ex tunc audire te feci, et annuntiavi? Itaque vos testes mei, quòd non sit Deus præter me, et non sit fortis quem ignorem.

9. Fictores sculptilis omnes vanitas; et desiderabilia eorum nihil prosunt; et testes eorum ipsi, quòd non vident, nec cognoscunt; ideoque confundentur.

10. Quis formator Dei? et quis sculptilis conflator, quod nullam ad rem usui est?

11. Ecce omnes socii ejus pudefient, et artifices ipsi sunt ex hominibus. Ut conveniant omnes, ac stent, pavebunt, et pudefient simul.

12. Faber ferrarius limam (*aut forcipem*) sumet; operabitur in prunis, malleis formabit illud; operabitur in eo, brachio virtutis suæ; etiam famelicus, ut deficiant vires; non bibat aquam, ut fatiscat.

13. Faber lignarius extendit regulam, illud delineat filo tincto, aptat planulis, circino figurat; facit illud secundum formam viri, secundum effigiem hominis, ut sedeat in domo.

14. Succidet sibi cedros, tollet ilicem et quercum; roborabitur ad ligna silvæ; plantabit pinum, quam pluvia enutriet.

15. Tum erit homini in incendium; nam accipiet ex illis, et calefaciet se; præterea furnum accendet, et coquet panes; Deum quoque efficiet, atque adorabit; finget idolum, et prosternet se coram eo.

16. Partem ejus comburet igni; ex parte carnem comedet; assabit assaturam, et saturabitur. Deinde

fied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

17. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god.

18. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand.

19. And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

20. He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?

21. Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou *art* my servant: I have formed thee; thou *art* my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

22. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

23. Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done *it*: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

24. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I *am* the Lord that maketh all *things*; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

25. That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise *men* backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

calefaciet se, ac dicet, Ohe calefactus sum, et vidi ignem.

17. Reliquias ejus in Deum vertit in sculptile suum; incurvat se coram eo; adorat et precatur illud, dicens, Libera me, quia Deus meus es.

18. Nescierunt, nec intellexerunt; quia oblevit oculos eorum, ne videant, et cor eorum, ne intelligant.

19. Non redit ad cor suum, non est sensus, nec intelligentia, ut dicat, Partem ejus combussi igni; etiam super prunas ejus coxi panem; assavi carnem, et comedi; residuum ejus in abominationem vertam: coram trunco ligni incurvabo me?

20. Pascit cinerem, cor seductum inclinat eum, ut non liberet animam suam, neque dicat, Annon mendacium in dextera mea?

21. Memor esto horum, Iacob, et Israel, quia servus meus es; formavi te; servus meus es; Israel, ne obliviscaris mei.

22. Delevi, ut nubem, iniquitates tuas; ut nebulam, peccata tua. Revertere ad me, quia redemi te.

23. Laudate, cœli, quia fecit Iehova; jubilate, inferiora terræ; erumpite, montes, in laudem; silva et omnis arbor quæ in ea est; quoniam redemit Iehova Iacob, et in Israel glorificabitur.

24. Sic dicit Iehova redemptor tuus, et factor tuus ex utero. Ego Iehova faciens omnia, extendens cœlos solus, expandens terram mea virtute (*vel, a meipso.*)

25. Dissipans signa divinatorum, ariolos dementans, convertens sapientes retrorsum, et scientiam eorum infatuans.

26. That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

27. That saith to the deep, Be dry; and I will dry up thy rivers:

28. That saith of Cyrus, *He is* my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

26. Suscitans verbum servi sui, et consilium nuntiorum suorum perficiens; dicens Ierosolymæ, Habitaberis; et civitatibus Iuda, Extruemini; et ruinas ejus erigam.

27. Dicens profundo, Exsiccare, et flumina tua arefaciam.

28. Dicens Cyro, Pastor meus; et omnem voluntatem meam perficiet; dicendo etiam Ierosolymæ, Ædificaberis; et templo, Fundaberis.

1. *Yet now hear.* Having a little before rebuked the transgressions of the people, and declared that all deserved eternal perdition, because both the princes and the people had polluted everything by their crimes, he now mitigates that severity of punishment, and comforts the people. In this passage I consider the particle ו (*vau*) to mean *But* or *Yet*, as in many other passages. As if he had said, "Though grievous afflictions are about to overtake thee, *yet now* hear what I will do for thy sake." The verse must be viewed in connection with the former argument, because the Lord declares that he will never permit his people to perish altogether, though they be grievously afflicted. Hence infer, that God is never so angry with his Church as not to leave some room for mercy, as we have already seen on many occasions. The consequence is, that the prophets, whenever they threaten, always add some consolation as an abatement.

But lest we should imagine that men have deserved it by their good conduct, he therefore adds, *whom I have chosen;* for we do not serve God, because we are entitled to it, or deserve it, but because he renders us fit by a free election. In this passage, therefore, the words *Servant* and *Elect* are synonymous, yet so that election comes first in order, and therefore David says that he was God's "servant" before he was born, because even from his mother's womb he had been received into God's family. (Psalm xxii. 10; lxxi. 6; cxvi. 16.)

2. *Thus saith Jehovah thy Maker.* Though he treated the Jews harshly, that they might be stripped of all false con-

fidence, and might humbly betake themselves to the grace of God, he now caresses them pleasantly by a mild and gentle discourse, that they may know that by self-denial they shall sustain no loss. We must therefore supply here the following contrasts. "Thou, Jacob, art indeed nothing in thyself, but God thy Maker will not despise his work; no nobleness of birth would secure thee against perdition, but the adoption which the Heavenly Father has been pleased to bestow upon thee will be abundantly sufficient for redeeming thee." Besides, we should keep in mind what I have often said already, that the Prophet does not speak of the first creation by which we are born to be human beings, but of the regeneration which belongs and is peculiar to the elect, that they may obtain a place in the Church of God.

He that formed thee from the womb. This is added, that men may not claim anything for themselves, as if they had moved him to shew kindness to them. By these words he also exhibits to them a hereditary covenant, by which God separated them to be his inheritance "before they were born." (Rom. ix. 11.) Some think that this refers to the person of Jacob, because, by taking hold of his brother's foot, (Gen. xxv. 26,) he gave a remarkable proof of his election; but this is a forced interpretation, and therefore I give a wider signification to these words, namely, that the Lord was kind and bountiful to his people from the commencement, and cut off all merits; because by free grace he "formed him," and then freely bestowed on him all blessings.

He will help thee. Some supply the relative, "*Who* will help thee;" as if he had said, "Thy Helper;" but it is better to read the clause separately.[1] It would be still more clear in the first person, "I will help thee;" but as to the substance of the meaning it makes no difference. The statement amounts to this, that he who is the Creator of the people will be ready to give his assistance when the proper time shall arrive. Let every person therefore adopt that reading which he thinks proper; but I have preferred to

[1] "Even on the common supposition, that the words of God begin with the second clause, it is better to take 'He will help thee' as a short independent clause, parenthetically thrown in to complete the description, or to connect it with what follows."—*Alexander.*

follow the simple and natural meaning, without supplying any word.

O beloved! The word ישרון (*yĕshūrūn*) is explained in various ways. Some think that it is derived from ישר, (*yāshăr*,) which means "to be upright," or "to please;" others from שור, (*shūr*,) and others from אשר, (*āshăr*.) But I rather agree with those who translate it *Beloved*, and derive it from the root ישר, (*yāshăr*.) This designation is also bestowed on that nation by Moses in his song; for, although some render it in that passage *Upright*, and in this passage also, the old rendering is more suitable, "My beloved is grown fat." (Deut. xxxii. 15.) The Prophet adorns his nation with these titles, that the Jews may be led by past benefits to entertain hope for the future. This rule ought to be held by all believers as perpetually binding, that, after having experienced the kindness of God toward them, they should likewise expect it for the future; for otherwise they will be excessively ungrateful, and will shew that they do not rely on the promises of God, which, when they are impressed on our hearts, undoubtedly bring peace and safety; not that we should be utterly devoid of fear, but that we should strive against all dread and distrust; and therefore he again repeats,—

Fear thou not, Jacob. Such is also the import of the consolation given by Christ, "Fear not, little flock, for my Father hath good will towards thee." (Luke xii. 32.) And, indeed, among the dangers which threaten death on all sides, no remedy is better adapted to allay terrors than that God has been pleased to bestow his favour upon us, so that he will save us for ever. By the word "Beloved," therefore, he again repeats that this depends on the favour and protection of God, who ascribes to himself, and entirely claims, all the good that existed among the people.

3. *For I will pour waters.* He continues the same subject, and at the same time explains what will be the nature of that assistance which he has promised. But we ought always to keep in remembrance that these prophecies relate to that sorrowful and afflicted period of which he formerly spoke, that is, when the people, in the extremity to which

they were reduced, might think that they were altogether forsaken, and that all the promises of God were vain. Isaiah meets this doubt, and compares the people to a dry and *thirsty* land, which has no moisture at all. By this metaphor David also describes his wretchedness. (Psalm cxliii. 6.) Although therefore they were worn out by afflictions, and the vital moisture was decayed, yet, that they might not throw away courage in their deepest distresses, they ought to have set before their minds this declaration of the Prophet. We, too, when we are brought into the greatest dangers, and see nothing before us but immediate death, ought in the same manner to betake ourselves to these promises, that we may be supported by them against all temptations. Yet we must feel our drought and poverty, that our thirsty souls may partake of this refreshing influence of the waters.

I will pour my Spirit. Jehovah himself explains what he means by *waters* and *rivers*, that is, *his Spirit.* In another passage the Spirit of God is called "water," but in a different sense. When Ezekiel gives the name "water" to the Holy Spirit, he at the same time calls it "clean water," with a view to cleansing. (Ezek. xxxvi. 25.) Isaiah will afterwards call the Spirit "waters," but for a different reason, that is, because by the secret moisture of his power he quickens souls. But these words of the Prophet have a wider signification, because he does not speak merely of the Spirit of regeneration, but alludes to the universal grace which is spread over all the creatures, and which is mentioned in Psalm civ. 30, "Send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and he will renew the face of the earth." As David declares in that passage that every part of the world is enlivened, so far as God imparts to it secret vigour, and next ascribes to God might and power, by which, whenever he thinks fit, he suddenly revives the ruinous condition of heaven and earth, so now for the same reason Isaiah gives the appellation "water" to the sudden renewal of the Church; as if he had said that the restoration of the Church is at God's disposal, as much as when he fertilizes by dew or rain the barren and almost parched lands.

Thus the Spirit is compared to "water," because without Him all things decay and perish through drought, and because by the secret watering of his power he quickens the whole world, and because the barrenness occasioned by drought and heat is cured in such a manner, that the earth puts on a new face. This is still more fully explained by the word which he afterwards employs, *Blessing.*

4. *And they shall spring up.* These words contain nothing more than what I quoted from Psalm civ. 30, that, when the Spirit of God has been sent forth, the whole face of the earth is renewed, and those fields which formerly were burnt up with thirst are green and flourish, just as the herbs grow, after having been watered by the rains. By these metaphors he extends the view of this subject, and more fully shews that it is quite as easy for God to enlarge by additional offspring the Church, which was desolate, and which had been reduced to ruinous and frightful solitude, as to impart to the earth the power of bringing forth. Yet, though he does not speak of regeneration, still we may apply to it this statement; because he speaks of the restoration of the Church, the chief part of which is the new creature by which the Lord restores his image in the elect. This doctrine may indeed be drawn from it and more copiously explained, but we must first explain the Prophet's design, and lay open the plain and natural meaning of his words.

5. *One shall say.* Hitherto the Prophet has spoken metaphorically, but now expresses his meaning plainly without any figure of speech. He shews what is the nature of that vegetation and herbage of which he spoke. It means that out of all nations the Lord will gather his people, and will bring into his Church those who were formerly strangers, and will raise up and enlarge his Church, which formerly appeared to be reduced to nothing; for all shall flock to her from every quarter, and shall wish to be enrolled in the number of believers, as it is also said, "Behold Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia; that man was born there." (Psalm lxxxvii. 4.) That passage, though hitherto it seemed to be obscure, through the mistakes of interpreters, is exceedingly well adapted to the illustration of this prophecy, that be-

lievers, who might have been terrified and ashamed on account of their diminished numbers, (for we know that but a small number returned from captivity,) might cherish hope of that illustrious and magnificent grace of Redemption which had been celebrated by the prophets. To meet these views, that Prophet, whoever he was, that was the author of the psalm, declares that the Babylonians and Egyptians shall be citizens of the Church, and that the Ethiopians and Tyrians, and those who formerly were strangers, shall come for the purpose of being enrolled among the people of God. "Now," says he, "Jerusalem lies waste; but one day God will not only gather those who are scattered, but will also call others from every quarter, and will unite in one body those who are now at the greatest variance, so that they shall boast of being citizens of Jerusalem, and shall belong to the body of the chosen people as much as if they had been natives." The same thing is taught in this passage by the Prophet Isaiah, from whom the author of the psalm undoubtedly borrowed that sentiment.

And another shall be called by the name of Jacob. The general meaning is, that there will be a vast assembly of men, who shall be united in faith and in obedience to the one true God. But as, in a registration, every person either pronounces or writes his own name, the Prophet, keeping his eye on this custom, employs the following modes of expression,—"One shall write with his hand, I am God's, and shall take the surname of Israel; another shall acknowledge that he is God's, and shall be called by the name of Jacob." He describes something new and uncommon, for he who formerly had nothing to do with God shall boast that God hath adopted him. "To be called" is in this place equivalent to the French phrase, *Se reclamer*, that is, "to declare one's self to belong to a person;" just as formerly, when he spoke of women to whom the name of their husbands served for a protection, he introduces them as saying, "Let thy name be called on us," that is, "Let us be named by thy name." (Isaiah iv 1.)

Although Isaiah appears, in this passage, to distinguish between those who in express terms shall declare that they

belong to the people of God, and shall wish to be named by the name of Jacob, yet both clauses refer to the same persons, because to be a child of God, and to be an Israelite, are two things closely connected, for God determines that the Church shall be the mother of all his children. Yet it ought to be remarked, that none are the lawful citizens of the Church but those who submit to the government of God. If the Prophet had passed by the name of God and mentioned "Jacob" and "Israel," still we must have begun with the Head, from whom proceeds all relationship both in heaven and in earth; but, that there may be no remaining ambiguity, he has twice described this order, that none are reckoned to belong to the seed of Jacob but they who obey God.

Hence we easily see what is the Prophet's meaning; for he shews that the Church, so long as she is destitute of the blessing of God, withers and gradually falls into decay; but that, when the Spirit of God has been poured out, she is quickened, and at length gathers strength, not only for recovering her former condition, but so as to grow by wonderful increase beyond expectation. Let us remember, however, that the Prophet does not speak of the order of nature, as if the new children of the Church were born such from the womb, because no person gains such high rank by his own industry; but when they who formerly were aliens have been regenerated by faith, he says that they will eagerly enrol their names, in order to testify that they are the children of God. Thus he describes a change which surpasses nature and all the conceptions of men, when out of the accursed race of Adam is formed a spiritual Israel.

Some think that the Prophet here expresses the small number of believers, when he says, "One shall be called, another shall write;" but that argument has little weight, and even the context furnishes an easy refutation of their error. In my opinion, we should rather understand him to mean that the Church shall be collected in crowds out of various and distant nations; because God will assemble strangers under his authority, and will stir them up to boast sincerely, and not in empty words, that they belong to his

people. It ought also to be observed, that true faith cannot stand without breaking forth immediately into confession; for such is the import of these four words, "To be called by the name of Israel, To write, To be known, To say, I am the Lord's;" for they who sincerely worship God ought not to be dumb, but to testify both by actions and by words what they carry inwardly in their hearts. They profess to be the servants of God, and glory in his name during the whole course of his life.

6. *Thus saith Jehovah.* The Prophet now does nothing else than confirm the preceding doctrine, which was highly necessary; for the hearts of men, being prone to distrust, are easily dismayed by adversity, and may be encouraged by one or more exhortations. It was not superfluous, therefore, to employ many words in confirming them; because we never ascribe as much as we ought to ascribe to the power of God, but are distracted by a variety of thoughts, and are too strongly attached to the present state of things.

The King of Israel, and his Redeemer. After having made use of the unutterable name of God, the Prophet calls him also "King" and "Redeemer;" because it is not enough that we perceive the power of God, if we are not convinced of his good-will towards us. In order, therefore, that his promises may produce their proper effect upon us, he mentions not only his glory, but also his goodness, that we may know that it extends to us. It might be thought absurd that he called him "King," while there was scarcely any people; but believers ought to rely on this promise, that they might behold the kingdom by faith, and contemplate it as future, though they did not behold it with their eyes. And indeed this doctrine would never have penetrated their hearts, when they were reduced to the greatest extremity, and were almost overwhelmed with despair, if the way had not been opened by this preface. But when God familiarly addresses us, and declares that he is united to us, faith, allured by so gentle an invitation, rises up out of hell itself.

I am the first. By these words he does not assert God's eternity, but shews that He is always like himself, that they may hope that He will be to them in future what they have

found him to be in the past. But why, it may be said, does he speak in this manner to believers, who knew it well? I reply, though men believe God, yet they do not acknowledge him to be what he is, and sometimes ascribe less to him than to the creature. The Prophet, therefore, wishes that our minds should be pure and free from every false imagination, and that we should raise them to heaven, that they may be altogether fixed on God alone. Besides, it was necessary that the people, who had been so terribly distressed, should be fortified against such violent attacks, that they might firmly keep their ground.

7. *And who as I?* Here the Lord compares himself with idols, as we have already seen in another passage. In the present instance the object is, that, when they were fiercely insulted by the Babylonian conquerors, they might not be discouraged, or think that their hopes were disappointed; for the taunts which were hurled at them by wicked men were exceedingly harsh and insolent. "Where is their God?" (Psalm lxxix. 10.) "Why does he not assist you?" Such blasphemies might shake the minds of believers, and disturb them in such a manner that they would throw away hope and confidence; and therefore the Prophet dwells more earnestly on this matter, in order to confirm believers more and more. That mournful calamity of the nation was like a dark cloud, which prevented believers from seeing the face of God; and in the meantime unbelievers danced for joy, as if the power of their gods had shone forth in full brightness. In order to dispel that darkness of error, the Prophet shews that still undoubted marks and proofs of the glory of God are distinctly visible, so as to distinguish him from idols; that is, because in due time he publicly made known what was future, that the Jews might recognise him to be a righteous Judge in chastisements, and yet might hope that he would be reconciled and gracious.

Shall call. The word *call* may be taken in two senses, so as to refer either to foreknowledge or to action; for, as God governs all things by his providence, so he knows everything that is future, and gives evidence of his foreknowledge. It is unnecessary to give ourselves much trouble about the

meaning of this word, for it is very evident that the Prophet ascribes to God both the foreknowledge and the government of all things. But for my own part, I rather think that it refers to action. "Shall there be found among the gods of the nations any one that can *call*, that is, raise up, announce, and appoint deliverers? Does not this plainly shew that I alone am God?" Thus he defies idols, to whom groundlessly men ascribe any power. By the word which he immediately adds, *shall tell it*, he magnifies the special grace of God, in deigning to reveal his purpose to the elect people by the prophets.

Since I appointed the people of the age. By "the people of the age" some understand all nations, the singular number being used instead of the plural, because, as soon as the Lord multiplied the nations, he separated them from each other, and established that order which should last through future ages. Others extend it to all the creatures, viewing the stars as one people, the vegetable tribes as another, and in like manner animals as another, and so forth. But when I examine the matter closely, I am constrained to adopt an opposite opinion, namely, that the Lord speaks of his own people, and calls them "the people of the age," because they are preferred to all others. Other nations, indeed, were unquestionably more ancient. The Egyptians boasted of their antiquity, and so did the Arcadians and others. But Abraham was brought out of Mesopotamia, (Gen. xi. 31; Acts vii. 2,) when the Chaldees were in a highly flourishing condition, and lived at home a solitary individual, as if at his death the remembrance of him should quickly perish, while the neighbouring countries were highly populous, and were eminent in other respects.

The antiquity of Israel, therefore, ought not to be estimated from the number of years, or from the outward condition of things, but from the election of God; and hence also the foundations of Jerusalem are called eternal. (Psalm lxxviii. 69.) It is therefore as if he had said, "Before idols were framed by men, I determined that I should have a Church, which should last for ever." This "people," therefore, is the most ancient and most excellent of all, though

others may come before it either in time or in rank; for, as all things were created for the sake of man, so all men were appointed to be of service to the Church; so that there are none, though occupying a higher eminence, that do not sink to a lower rank; for the Church is the body of Christ, which nothing can exceed in antiquity or excellence. To adopt the fables of the Jews, that Jerusalem was founded from the very beginning, would be absurd, because in this passage there is no reference to dates; but yet we ought to hold by this principle, that the elect people holds a higher rank than the heathen nations, in consequence of approaching more nearly to God, who is the fountain of eternity.

Let them tell. This permission shews that it is vain for men to expect a revelation from idols, which, if they tell anything, delude by tricks, and by words of doubtful meaning, those who consult them, as we have already mentioned.

8. *Fear not.* Isaiah now explains the reason why he formerly spoke of the power of God, that is, in order to confirm the faith of the people. From the preceding statements he draws this conclusion,—"Since the Lord is so powerful, and governs all things at his pleasure, the people whom he hath taken under his protection ought not to fear."

Have I not since then made thee hear? He next repeats what he had already said, that God not only brought assistance secretly to the Jews, and suddenly, as if by legerdemain, made his appearance when he was least expected, but kept their faith alive by many predictions, and, in short, gave manifest proofs of his fatherly kindness, so that his divinity was clearly perceived. It would be of no advantage to us that God knows and can do all things, if it were not also revealed how great concern he takes in our salvation. Although, therefore, he wishes that many things should be unknown to us, yet he communicates everything that is useful or advantageous for us to know. מֵאָז, (*mēāz,*) *from then,* means a long period; or, if it be thought better, it denotes an opportunity; for the Lord reveals his secrets to the elect, when he sees a fit season; but the former interpretation appears to me to be more simple.

Therefore ye are my witnesses. He means what I have

already remarked, that the people cannot plead the excuse of ignorance for not being satisfied with one God; for he has abundantly revealed himself to them, so as to give a testimony concerning himself. The object intended to be gained by our knowledge of the glory of God is, that we should profess his truth before men, as has been already said, if we do not wish to extinguish the light which he hath brought to us by his Spirit. Again, we cannot be "witnesses to God" if we are not confirmed by his truth; for a testimony proceeding from a doubtful opinion would be of no avail, and therefore we must be taught by the Word of God, so as to have a fixed and unhesitating hope of salvation.

And there is no strong God.[1] In this passage, as in many others, he applies to God the epithet *strong;* for it is not enough to acknowledge God's eternal essence, if we do not also ascribe strength to him. But for this, we shall leave him nothing but a bare and empty name, as is done by wicked men, who with the mouth confess God, and afterwards ascribe his power to this and to that.

9. *The formers of a graven image.* The Lord now shews, on the contrary, how wretched idolaters are who wander amidst their contrivances, and are not founded on the eternal truth of God; for they have no knowledge or sound understanding. As he justly pronounced the people, a little before, to be guilty of ingratitude, if the proofs of the grace of God did not encourage them to the exercise of faith, so he now arms and fortifies them against all the superstitions of the Gentiles. Unbelievers being both very numerous and very wealthy, he says that all are nothing,[2] and, next, that amidst all their magnificence there is nothing but imposture.

And their desirable things do not profit. Under the term *desirable things*, he includes not only idols, but all their worship, and the ornaments, honour, and obedience which foolish men render to them, and denotes those things by a highly appropriate name; for since the chief object of life is to acknowledge and worship God, (which alone is our principal distinction from the brutes,) we ought to prefer it to all

[1] "There is no God. Heb., Rock."—(Eng. Ver.)
[2] "Que tous sont vanité." "That all are vanity."

things, even to the most valuable, so as to direct to him all our prayers, and, in a word, all the thoughts of our heart. With good reason, therefore, does Scripture employ this word in speaking of the worship of God; but here the Prophet speaks of corrupt worship and the mad *desire* of idols, by which men are hurried along; and therefore he says, that all that they desire or eagerly perform is vain and useless. Frequently, too, this "desire" is compared to the love of a harlot, by which men are bewitched and almost blinded, so as not to perceive their baseness or yield to any reason. But we have explained this under a former passage. (Isaiah i. 29.)[1]

And they are their witnesses. Some explain this to mean that the idols bear testimony against themselves, and plainly shew how vain they are, so that they who do not perceive it must be exceedingly stupid. But I do not at all approve of that exposition, and prefer to follow those who refer it to the worshippers of idols, who themselves are aware of their being so utterly vain; for they know that they neither see nor understand anything. And in this passage there is a contrast between the testimony of the people of God and that of idolaters. The former will give an illustrious testimony of the glory of God from his works and promises and predictions; the latter will be constrained to be dumb, if they do not choose to bring forward contrivances which have no certainty whatever, and therefore are false and vain. Wicked men boast, indeed, of their worship with great haughtiness, and loudly applaud themselves; but their conscience[2] is "a witness" how uncertain and vain is all that they do, for they always tremble, and never find rest, though their obduracy leads them to violent exertions.

They will themselves, therefore, bear testimony against their idols; just as, if a man were to employ an ignorant teacher, he may be a witness of his ignorance. In like manner they will bear witness that their gods neither know nor can do anything; for they see that they are composed of stone or wood or some other material, and that they

[1] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. i. p. 84.

[2] "Ce peu qu'ils ont de conscience." "The little conscience that they have."

neither can see nor understand anything. Thus believers alone will render a true testimony to their God, because he knows, directs, and governs all things. The rest must at length be *ashamed,* though now they defend their errors with mad eagerness; for their conscience is a witness that nothing but opinion and a vain imagination holds their minds captive.[1]

10. *Who is the maker of God?* He pours ridicule on the madness of men who dare to frame gods; for it is a shocking and detestable thing that men should take so much upon them as to create God. Every person certainly will greatly abhor such madness; and yet men are blindly impelled by foolish passion to manufacture gods, and no warning restrains them. On the other hand, they will say that this never entered into any man's mind, and that injustice is done to them when they are accused of so great madness; just as the Papists in the present day say that we slander them, when we employ these arguments of the Prophet against them. But in vain do they rely on their sophistical reasonings for avoiding this charge. What the Prophet says is most true, that they are so mad as to think that they "make God;" for as soon as the stone or wood has been carved or polished, they ascribe to it divinity, run to it, make prayers, call upon it, and prostrate themselves before it, and in short, ascribe to it those things which they know to belong to God alone.

Which is profitable for nothing. We ought carefully to observe this clause, which condemns as vain and useless all the images by which God is represented. Hence it follows not only that God is insulted, whenever his glory is changed into dead images, but that all who procure idols for themselves lose their pains and suffer damage. Papists allege that they are the books of the unlearned; but this is a paltry evasion, for the Prophet testifies that they are of no

[1] "The obscurity of this verse proceeds from too close a translation, which may be cleared up by this paraphrase, 'They that make a graven image are framers of a vain insignificant thing, for their idol can never profit them; they that make them can witness for them, that they see not, and have no knowledge, therefore they may be ashamed to worship them.'" —*White.*

use whatever. Let them, therefore, either erase this proof from the Book of Isaiah, or acknowledge that images are vain and useless. Formerly he expressed something more, when he affirmed that nothing can be learned from them but falsehood. But on this subject we have said enough in the exposition of these passages. (Isaiah xl. and xli.)

11. *Lo, all his companions shall be ashamed.* Not only does he attack the workers and makers of idols, but he likewise attacks generally all their worshippers, because they are so dull and stupid, that as soon as the trunk of a tree has received some new shape, they look upon it as containing the power of God. He means that not only shall the framers of idols be punished for their effrontery, but likewise all who have entangled themselves in the same superstitions; for it is right that they who share the same guilt should be subjected to the same punishment. Nor can they, on the other hand, plead any excuse; for they see that their idols, which proceeded from the hand of men, are dumb and vain, so far is it from being possible that they are gods.

Though they all assemble. Whatever conspiracy may be entered into by wicked men, yet, when they shall come to the judgment-seat of God, they must be ashamed. Nor is it without cause that the Prophet threatens against them *trembling* and *shame*, because wicked men usually are haughty and insolent, and look on all other men with scorn. They boast of their vast numbers, as the Papists in the present day despise our small numbers, and swell with insolence, and with amazing presumption attack God and his doctrine. In this passage, therefore, Isaiah appeals to the consciences of wicked men; because, although they are actuated by the most inveterate obstinacy and rebellion, yet sometimes they are constrained to tremble, when they ask themselves, "What are we doing?" and inquire into the reason of their actions; for they have nothing that is firm or solid, on which they can safely rest. They are bold so long as they are hurried on by their rage, but when they come to themselves, and take some leisure for reflection, they are terrified and dismayed; so that we need not be alarmed at their rage and pride and vast num-

bers, for they shall quickly pass away. Let us not therefore be moved by the conspiracies and displays and pride and rage and schemes of the Papists, since we know that all those things tend to their shame and destruction; for the more haughtily they swell and exalt themselves against God, the heavier shall be their fall, and the deeper their disgrace.

12. *The worker in iron.* With good reason does the Apostle here draw up a long description, in order to shake off the stupidity and madness of superstitious people, if they can at all be awakened, or, at least, to prevent the Jews from indulging in similar folly who were surrounded on all sides by innumerable worshippers of false gods; for he gives a minute and homely enumeration, which makes it exceedingly evident that they are frantic and outrageous. He might otherwise have condemned this wickedness in a single word or in a few words; but this catalogue points out the fact, as it were, with the finger, and places it before our eyes, while he details the tools and labours and industry and care of workmen, so as almost to bring it actually before us. Men who have their errors deeply rooted by nature in their hearts are more deeply affected in this manner than by simple doctrine; for they cannot be roused from their lethargy but by loud and continual cries. Every part must be delivered to them, and broken into small fragments, and even chewed and put into the mouth, as they do with infants, that they may receive the doctrine, which would otherwise appear to them strange and uncommon.

Even hungry. He describes the eagerness by which superstitious persons are impelled to fashion gods; for they burn with such ardour that they cannot observe any limit or measure. Their lust, like a gad-fly, drives them on, and causes them to rush forward with such fury that we may justly compare that zeal to the love of a harlot, as we have formerly said.[1] They apply to it their whole force both of body and of mind. This is what he means by *the arm of his strength*;[2] as if he had said, "All the strength of their arms is applied to it; they work against their natural inclinations, and scarcely take as much as is necessary for the support of

[1] See page 369. [2] "*The strength of his arms.*"—Eng. Ver.

life; in a word, they spare no labour or expense to make the gods whom they have desired.

Although he describes the constancy of toil, by saying that they do not slacken their labour when they are hungry, but endure hunger and thirst rather than relinquish their work,[1] yet we may appropriately extend the observation to all the efforts of inconsiderate zeal. We see how the fervent devotion, as they call it, of unbelievers, is their own executioner; but the more laboriously they toil for their own destruction, the more base and shameful is our slothfulness, by which we defraud God of his lawful worship.

13. *That it may abide in the house.* Thus he shews the folly of such intense application; for their toil brings no other reward than to see their idols resting indolently without motion in the position which has been assigned to them, just as if a sluggard were crouching over a fire or reclining on a couch.

14. *He shall cut down for himself.* The Prophet expresses not only the zeal and furious eagerness of idolaters, but also their rebellion and obstinacy; for when he says that they *cut down cedars* and *plant pine-trees*, he shews that they persevere very long in their madness, and are not prompted by any sudden impulse to manufacture gods. "Not only," says he, "do they choose trees that are already grown, but they even plant and water and cultivate them, and wait till they have come to their full size, so as to be fit material for making an idol."

When we read these things, and are instructed concerning this shocking madness, let us know that God lays his hand upon us, so to speak, in order to draw us back from it, and to keep us in true godliness. It is necessary, indeed, to meet it early, lest longer delay should make the wound incurable; for as soon as we have been led away by foolish

[1] The lamented missionary, Mr. Williams, discovered in the Islands of the Pacific a superstitious practice, probably very ancient, which sheds light on this passage. During the manfacture of an idol, the workmen scrupulously abstain from food, and do not even drink water; which accounts for the painful exhaustion and intense thirst described by the Prophet Isaiah as brought on at an advanced stage of the operation. "Their strength faileth," and "they are faint."—*Ed.*

desire to the practice of false worship, there is always reason to fear that we shall be plunged into that whirlpool. We all carry some seed of this madness, which cannot in any way be rooted out, but continually buds and blossoms, if we are not cleansed anew by the Spirit of the Lord.

It ought also to be remarked that, since idolaters are impelled by so great eagerness to worship idols, we ought to be ashamed of our coldness in the true worship of God. Let us be ashamed, I say, that we are so negligent and cold and even freezing, when the worshippers of idols are so ardent; and let us consider that we must render an account. With what rage are the Turks seized, when the question relates to the defence of the reveries of their prophet Mahomet, for whom they gladly both shed their blood and part with their life! By what rage are the Papists impelled to follow their superstitions! Yet we scarcely become warm, and sometimes extinguish the sparks of that zeal which the Lord has kindled in us. To this also applies that expostulation of Jeremiah, "Is there any nation that hath forsaken its gods? But my people have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged for themselves cisterns which cannot hold water." (Jer. ii. 10-13.) This comparison, therefore, ought to be carefully observed, that we may not be less steadfast in defending truth than they are obstinate in falsehood.

15, 16, and 17. *Then shall a man use it for burning.* He censures their ignorance in not being taught by manifest experience that a trunk of wood is not God, and even reproves their ingratitude in defrauding of the honour due to him the true God, whose power is illustriously displayed in the trees themselves; for the wood cannot be applied to various uses without bringing before our eyes the bounty of God. Whenever bread is baked in the oven, or flesh is seethed in the pot, or meat is roasted on the coals; whenever we warm ourselves, or obtain any advantage whatever from wood, our stupidity is inexcusable, if we do not consider how bountifully God hath provided for us, that we should not want anything necessary for us. Such is the meaning of these words,—

Aha! I am warm. These words express the gladness of

those who, freed from all uneasiness and annoyance, utter what may be called the language of triumph. What can be more base or foolish than that men, while they are pleasantly enjoying God's benefits, should flatter and applaud themselves, and at the same time should not thank the author, and should even abuse his abundant wealth for the purpose of dishonouring him? In cooking their victuals, and in other conveniences, men perceive that the wood is subject to their control and devoted to their use; how comes it then that they bow down before a piece of wood that has the shape of a man? Is not God in this manner robbed of his right? And when men call upon images, do they not defraud God of that sacrifice which he chiefly demands? Even heathen writers long ago laughed at this folly, that men ventured to form gods according to their own fancy out of corruptible matter which they formerly despised. Hence came that jest of Horace, "Once I was a trunk of a fig-tree, a useless piece of wood, when a carpenter, uncertain whether to make a bench or a Priapus, preferred that I should be a god; and so I became a god."[1] But they did not actually know the fountain of impiety, because they did not apply their minds to consider the goodness and power of One God, which is displayed in all the creatures.

When the Prophet thus attacked the worshippers of idols, and laid open their stupidity and madness, they undoubtedly complained that they were unjustly defamed, and endeavoured to cloak their errors under plausible pretexts, that they acknowledged that their gods were in heaven, as even their writings shewed, and did not mean that wood or stone is God, in the same manner as the Papists, in arguing against us, defend the same cause with them, and absolutely refuse to be condemned for such gross blindness. But we have already said that the Prophet does not confine his attention to the mere essence of God; and indeed if this be all that is left to God, it will be an idle phantom. He means that all the attributes which belong to him, his foreknowledge,

[1] Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum;
Quum faber, incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum,
Maluit esse Deum; Deus inde ego.
Hor. Sat. i. 8.

power, government, righteousness, salvation, and everything else, remains unimpaired. Now, when wicked men set up statues or images, and fly to them for the purpose of imploring assistance, and whenever they place them before their eyes and address them, and think that God hears them, do they not wickedly connect their salvation with them? But this stupidity arises from their ignorance of the nature of God, which is simple and spiritual, but which they imagine to be gross and carnal. Thus their thoughts concerning him are excessively wicked, and they cast aside and stain his glory, by making it like earthly and fading things. Nothing is so inconsistent with the majesty of God as images; and he who worships them endeavours to shut up God in them, and to treat him according to his own fancy. Justly, therefore, does the Prophet attack such corruptions, and sharply censure the mad zeal of superstitious persons, since nothing more detestable can be uttered or imagined.

18. *They have not known or understood.* He concludes that it is impossible that men endued with reason should have fallen into this mistake, if they had not been altogether blind and mad; for if any spark of reason had remained in them, they would have seen how absurd and ridiculous it is to adore a part of that wood which they had burned, and which they had seen with their own eyes consumed and reduced to ashes. But when they perceive nothing, and listen to no arguments, they shew that they have actually degenerated into beasts; for the expression which Isaiah uses in reproaching them, "They have not known," amounts to a declaration that they are bereft of reason, and have lost all understanding; and although many of them undoubtedly were very acute and sagacious, yet in this respect there was abundant evidence of their brutish folly.

For he hath smeared their eyes. The reason now assigned is not intended to lessen their guilt, but to shew how monstrous and detestable it is; for men would never be so foolish, if the vengeance of heaven did not drive them to "a reprobate mind." (Rom. i. 28.) Here some interpreters supply the word "God," and others supply the words "false prophets," and say that the people were blind, because the

false prophets led them astray; for they would never have plunged into such disgraceful errors if they had not been deceived by the impostures of those men, their eyes being dazzled by wicked doctrines. Others do not approve of either of these significations, and it might also refer to the devil. But as a different exposition is more customary in Scripture, I rather adopt it, namely, that God hath blinded them by a righteous judgment; if it be not thought preferable to view it as referring to themselves,[1] because they voluntarily shut both their minds and their eyes; in which case there would be a change of number, which frequently occurs among Hebrew writers. I have stated, however, what I prefer; and it is exceedingly customary among Hebrew writers, when they speak of God, not to mention his name.

In what sense God is said to blind men, and to "give them up to a reprobate mind," (Rom. i. 28,) is evident from various passages of Scripture; that is, when he takes away the light of his Spirit, and gives a loose rein to the lust of men, so that no reasoning can restrain them. He likewise arms Satan with the efficiency of error, so that they who have refused to obey the truth do not guard against his snares, and are liable to be deceived by his impostures. What then can be left in us but the thickest darkness and gross ignorance, so that this tyrant, the father of lies and of darkness, ravages at his pleasure both within and without? for there will not be found in us any spark of light to dispel the clouds of error, but, impelled by a spirit of giddiness with which God strikes the reprobate, (2 Thess. ii. 11,) we shall be driven about in a strange manner at the will of Satan.

And yet we must not throw on God the blame of this blindness, for he has always just cause, though it is not always visible to our eyes; and we ought not to make anxious inquiries respecting it, or search into his secret decree, if we do not choose to be punished for our rashness. But frequently the causes are well known, namely, the ingratitude of men and their rebellion against God, as Paul plainly shews. (Rom. i. 28.) The blinding is their just punishment, and therefore men have no excuse, though they pretend

[1] "Des idolatres mesmes." "To the idolaters themselves."

ignorance ; for they would never have been entangled in such gross errors, if the Lord had not blinded them on account of their sins. A very convincing argument may be drawn from the judgments of God to the sins of men ; for God is just, and never punishes any one without a just cause, and does not blind a man, unless he deserves it, and voluntarily shuts his eyes. The blame therefore lies with men alone, who have of their own accord brought blindness on themselves ; and the design of the Prophet undoubtedly is to shew, that men who ought to have been governed by God, being naturally endued with some judgment, have been forsaken by "the Father of lights," (James i. 17,) so that they become the slaves of Satan.

19. *It doth not return into their heart.* He confirms the preceding statement, and takes away every ground of excuse, because unbelievers of their own accord cherish their ignorance. That men are naturally careful and provident in worldly matters, but altogether blind in the worship of God, proceeds from no other cause than that they are abundantly attentive to their individual interests, but are not moved by any anxiety about the heavenly kingdom. Hence the Prophet reproves them for disregarding godliness, because, after long windings, unbelievers do not reflect whether they are keeping the right way, or, on the other hand, are uselessly fatiguing themselves with wicked errors.[1] He shews that their slothfulness is without excuse, because they are so much devoted to their superstitions ; for if they applied their mind for a short time to consider the matter, nothing would be more easy than to perceive that stupidity ; and, since they do not see it, it follows that they wish to be deceived, and that they flatter themselves in their error. They cannot, therefore, bring forward any palliation or excuse for their guilt, and cannot plead ignorance ; for they do not design to apply their mind to the labour of investigating truth. To "return into the heart"[2] means "to consider and reflect ;" for no child is so ignorant as not to be a com-

[1] "Apres des erreurs et superstitions." "After errors and superstitions."

[2] "The first phrase does not correspond exactly to the English 'Lay to heart,' but comprehends reflection and emotion."—*Alexander.*

petent judge of such extraordinary madness. Superstitious persons therefore give themselves too unlimited indulgence, and do not err merely through ignorance; and this vice ought not to be ascribed solely to the first corruption of men, but to rebellion.

20. *He feedeth on ashes.* This verse also confirms the preceding statement. To "feed on ashes" is the same thing as "to be fed with ashes," just as "to feed on wind" is the same thing as "to be fed with wind." (Hos. xii. 1.) Both expressions are used, as on the other hand, "Thou shalt feed on truth," is put for "Thou shalt be fed with truth," that is, "Thou shalt be satisfied." (Psalm xxxvii. 3.) Others interpret that passage, "Thou shalt administer spiritual provision," and others, "Thou shalt feed faithfully;" but I choose rather to adopt the former interpretation.[1] But here he means that men are haughty and puffed up, but yet that they are empty and worthless, because they are merely full of deceptions, which have nothing solid or lasting. With such pride men will rather burst than be satisfied.

A deceived heart disposes him. Next, he again includes both statements, that they are blinded by deceitful lusts, so as to see nothing, and yet that they voluntarily and willingly surrender themselves to vain delusions. The Prophet dwells largely on this, in order to shew that nothing drives men to false and wicked worship but this, that they are led to it of their own accord; and therefore there is no ground for imputing this vice to others, since they find in themselves the fountain which they earnestly nourish and defend. With strange presumption they rise up against God, are puffed up with a false opinion of their superstitions, and, in a word, are swollen and ready to burst with pride. But let us feed on the solid food of truth, and not allow ourselves to be led astray by any delusions.

Not to deliver his soul. He heightens the picture by saying that they flatter themselves in a matter so important; for who would forgive negligence in that which relates to

[1] The Author's exposition of Psalm xxxvii. 3, and the Editor's note, may be consulted with advantage.—Commentary on the Psalms, vol. ii. p. 19.—*Ed.*

salvation? We see how eagerly every person labours for this transitory life; and when the eternal salvation of the soul is in danger, what is more intolerable than that men should indolently slumber, when they might save it by making exertion? A man is said to deliver his own soul, who by repentance rescues himself from the snares of the devil, in the same manner as some men are said to save others, when by holy warnings they bring back wanderers into the right way. (James v. 20.) How comes it then that idolaters rush headlong to their own destruction? It is because they hasten to it at full gallop, harden their hearts, and do not permit themselves to be drawn back.

Is there not a lie[1] *in my right hand?* Thus he briefly points out the method by which men may deliver themselves from destruction. It is by examining their actions and not flattering themselves; for whoever is delighted with his error, and does not inquire if his manner of life be right, will never "deliver his soul." In like manner the Papists refuse to inquire into the reasons for their worship, and disguise that stupidity under the name of simplicity; as if God wished us to be beasts, and did not enjoin us to distinguish between the worship which he approves and that which he rejects, and to inquire diligently what is his will, so as not to approve of everything without distinction. Everything ought to be tried by the standard which he has laid down for us. If that be done, we shall easily avoid danger; but if not, let us lay the blame of our destruction on ourselves, because of our own accord we wish to perish, and do not allow ourselves to receive any warning, or to be brought back into the right path.

21. *Remember these things, O Jacob.* He now applies to the use of the people what he had so often said about the superstitions and falsehoods of the Gentiles, by which men who are not well instructed are deceived in the worship of God. Nor does he write these things solely for the men of his own age, but chiefly for their posterity, who were to be carried

[1] "שֶׁקֶר (*shĕkĕr*) denotes in general 'anything that deceives, a vain or deceitful thing,' which does not correspond to a man's opinion and expectation, but deceives and imposes upon him. Hence also (in Jer. x. 14, li. 17) an idol is called שֶׁקֶר (*shĕkĕr*)."—*Rosenmüller.*

away into Babylon, and might have been corrupted by long intercourse with the Babylonians, and drawn aside from the true worship of God, if the Lord had not laid upon them those restraints. The Prophet therefore exhorts them, while they were held captive, to bring those exhortations to remembrance, and by means of them to strengthen their hearts amidst those grievous calamities.

For thou art my servant, I have formed thee. He adds this reason why they ought to remember these promises, and to beware of the general contagion of other men ; for it would have been intolerable that the elect people, whom God had surrounded by the barriers of his Law, that they might be separated from others, should freely and indiscriminately mingle with the pollutions of the Gentiles. As if he had said, " It is not wonderful that the Babylonians should wander in their errors, but thou oughtest to be unlike them ; for ' I have formed thee,' that thou mightest ' serve me ;' I have regenerated and sanctified thee, that thou mightest be an heir of eternal life."

Of this creation we have stated largely, on former occasions, that it relates to the renewal of the soul. Scripture frequently employs this argument, " Ye have been called to sanctification and not to uncleanness," (1 Thess. iv. 7,) " Walk as the children of light" (Eph. v. 8) " in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," (Philip. ii. 15,) and in other passages of the same kind. Here we ought to infer that we shall be doubly punished, if it shall be found that we have quenched by neglect or indifference the light by which the Lord hath enlightened us ; for our criminality will be far greater than that of others on whom he has not bestowed a similar favour. Heathens shall indeed be punished, and no excuse of ignorance shall be of any avail to them ; but far heavier shall be the punishment of those who shall abuse the grace of God.

Do not thou forget me. He means that it is impossible for any who have once entered into the right path to be led aside from it, if they are not chargeable with forgetfulness of God ; for error and delusions can never prevail, so long as the remembrance of God is rooted in our hearts. Let

every one, therefore, who turns aside from God, and falls into superstition and impiety, lay the blame on his own wickedness. We ought thus to observe carefully the cause of apostasy, that is, forgetfulness of God, which gradually withdraws us from the right path, till we leave it altogether. Besides, he reminds them that by this remedy they will be secure against revolt, if they be employed in constant meditation; for our minds, through their sluggishness, easily contract rust, so to speak, which infects and corrupts all knowledge of God till it be entirely destroyed.

22. *I have blotted out, as a cloud, thy iniquities.* The Lord promises to his people future deliverance; for our hearts cannot be actually raised towards God, if we do not perceive that he is reconciled to us. In order, therefore, that he may keep the people whom he hath once bound to himself, he adds a promise by which he comforts them, that they may be fully convinced that the banishment shall not be perpetual; for God, being a most indulgent Father, moderates his chastisements in such a manner, that he always forgives his children.

When he says that "he has blotted out their iniquities," this relates literally to the captives who were punished for their transgressions; and the consequence was, that, when God was appeased, they would be delivered. It is a demonstration from the cause to the effect. The guilt has been remitted, and therefore in like manner the punishment has been remitted; for the Jews, as soon as they have been reconciled to God, are freed from the punishment which was inflicted on account of guilt. Yet there is an implied exhortation to repentance, that they may not only groan under the heavy load of chastisement, but may consider that they are justly punished, because they have provoked God's anger; and indeed, whenever God deals severely with us, we ought not merely to wish relief from uneasiness and pain, but we ought to begin with pardon, that God may no longer impute sins to us. Yet this passage overthrows the distinction of the Sophists, who acknowledge that guilt is remitted, but deny that punishment is remitted, as we have already explained fully in other passages.

The metaphor of "a cloud" has the same meaning as if the Lord had said that he will no longer pursue them in his displeasure,[1] or punish them, because, when guilt has been remitted, they are reconciled; in the same manner as when the sky has become calm, the clouds which intercepted from the earth the light of the sun, are "blotted out" and disappear. We must therefore reject the diabolical inventions of men, which overthrow the whole doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, while they openly contradict the doctrine of the prophets.

Return thou to me. This may be taken in two senses, either that the Lord exhorts the people to repentance, or that he encourages them to hope for deliverance; but both senses may agree well. We have said that it is the ordinary practice of Scripture, whenever redemption is mentioned, to exhort to repentance; for the Lord wishes to bring us back to himself in this manner, that he may render us fit for receiving his favours. Besides, as the people, through their unbelief, were very far from cherishing the hope of salvation, it may likewise be taken for a confirmation, that the people may believe that they will undoubtedly return; as if he had said, "Though thou thinkest that I am estranged from thee, yet know that I will take care of thee." And I approve more this latter sense, and think that it agrees better with the context; for the Prophet labours above all things to confirm the promises of God, and to fix them deeply on their hearts.

For I have redeemed thee. He commands the Jews to "return to him," though their banishment stood in the way of their expecting that he would be a deliverer; as if he had said, "Though I appear to be estranged from you, yet trust; for I have determined to *redeem you.*"

23. *Praise, O ye heavens.* He now exhorts the Jews to render thanksgiving, not only that they may testify their gratitude, but that their own expectation of deliverance may be strengthened; and, therefore, he enjoins believers to look upon it as an event already accomplished, as if the Lord had already delivered them. Such modes of address make a

[1] "A la rigueur." "Rigorously."

deeper impression on our hearts than if the promises had been presented in a naked form. Since, therefore, believers might doubt of their salvation, because they still languished amidst their miseries and were almost dead, the Prophet arouses them, and not only dictates to them a song, that they may fulfil their vows, but shews that the word of God will be so great and uncommon that it shall move heaven and earth and the dumb creatures.

Burst into praise, ye mountains. We might simply have interpreted it, "Heaven above and earth below;" but as he mentions the "mountains," he gives the appellation of the *lower parts of the earth* to places which are level, such as plains and valleys, that all countries, wherever they are situated, may be excited to praise and celebrate the name of God.

For Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob. He now adds, that that work which he had aroused all to admire is the redemption of the Church, and declares that the glory of God shall shine forth in it illustriously. Besides, it is proper to remember what I formerly remarked, that here not only does he celebrate the return of the people to their native country, but the end is also included; for they would be "redeemed" from the captivity in Babylon on this condition, that God should at length collect under one head a Church taken out of the whole world.[1]

24. *Thus saith Jehovah.* The Prophet will immediately describe in his own manner the strength and power of God; because the bare promises would have little authority and weight, if the power of God were not brought forward, in order to remove all doubt from our hearts. By our distrust and obstinacy we are wont to lessen the power and goodness of God, that is, to ascribe to it less than we ought; and, therefore, the Prophet, by remarkable commendations, which we shall soon afterwards see, will encourage believers to learn to hope beyond hope.

Thy Redeemer. He begins by praising the goodness and fatherly kindness with which God has embraced his Church,

[1] "Son Eglise composee de toutes les nations de la terre." "His Church composed of all the nations in the world."

and which he intends to exercise till the end; for the declaration of his power and strength would have little influence on us, if he did not approach to us and assure us of his kindness. We ought not therefore to begin with his majesty, nor to ascend so high, lest we be thrown down; but we ought to embrace his goodness, by which he gently invites us to himself. The name *Redeemer* in this passage refers to past time, because the Jews, who had once been brought out of Egypt, as from a gulf, by an incredible miracle, ought to have been strengthened by the remembrance of that "redemption" to expect continual advancement. (Exod. xii. 51.)

And thy Maker. He calls himself the "Maker," in the same sense which we formerly explained; that is, because he regenerates by his Spirit those whom he adopts, and thus makes them new creatures; and therefore he mentions, in passing, the former benefits which they had received, that they may conclude from them, for the future, that God will abide by his promises. When he added *from the womb,* it was in order that the people might acknowledge that all the benefits which they had received from God were undeserved; for he anticipated them by his compassion, before they could even call upon him. By this consolation David comforted his heart in very severe distresses, "Thou art he who brought me out of the womb; I trusted in thee while I was hanging on my mother's breast; I was thrown on thee from my birth; thou art my God from my mother's womb." (Ps. xxii. 9, 10.) Yet here he does not speak of the favour generally bestowed, by which God brings any human beings into the world, but praises his covenant, by which he adopted the seed of Abraham to a thousand generations; for they were not at liberty to doubt that he would wish to preserve his work even to the end.

Who alone stretcheth out the heavens. Now follow the commendations of his power, because he has measured out at his pleasure the dimensions of heaven and earth. By the word "stretcheth out" he means that he has in his hands the government of the whole world, and that there is nothing that is not subject to him; for the power of God ought to

be united to his word in such a manner as never to be separated.

25. *Frustrating the signs.* The Prophet expressly added this, because Babylon surpassed other nations not only in the force of arms, and in troops and resources, but likewise in some remarkable sagacity, by which she appeared to penetrate even to heaven. What injury could befall those who foresaw at a distance future events, and could easily, as was commonly supposed, ward off imminent dangers? The astrologers, who were celebrated among them, foretold all events; and from them sprung that bastard Astrology which is called Judicial, by which even now many persons of great abilities are led astray. They assumed the name of Mathematicians, in order to recommend themselves more to the approbation of the people. The Egyptians boasted of being the authors of that science, and of being the first who taught it; but let us leave them to settle their dispute. It is certain that the Babylonians practised that art from the very commencement, and esteemed it highly, so that both the Greeks and the Romans gave to those astrologers the name of Chaldees. Since, therefore, they placed much confidence in that science, the Lord threatens that he will overthrow all that belongs to it.

By the word *signs* he means the positions, conjunctions, and various aspects of the stars, about which Astrologers speculate; and he afterwards says that he *maketh them mad.* Some take the word בַּדִּים (*bădddīm*) to mean *lies*, as if he had said that the divinations to which the Astrologers pretend are nothing but absolute delusions; but I choose rather to interpret it *diviners*, as we frequently find it used in that sense.

It is asked, "Does he condemn the astrology of the Chaldeans universally, or only the abuse and corruption of it?" I reply, in this passage he merely condemns those *signs* by means of which the Chaldeans prophesied, and imagined that they knew future events; for the Lord declares that they are absolutely worthless. It was not without good reason that he forbade the people to consult Chaldeans, astrologers, diviners, soothsayers, or any other kind of fortune-tellers, and com-

manded that no one who practised that art should be permitted to dwell among the people. (Deut. xviii. 10.) Now, if any certain information could have been obtained from the position and aspect of the stars, the Lord undoubtedly would not thus have condemned that science. Since, therefore, he forbade it without exception, he shewed that it contains nothing but absolute delusion, which all believers ought to detest.

But the defenders of that absurdity argue that the Lord gave the planets and stars "for signs." (Gen. i. 14.) Granting this principle, I reply, that we ought to inquire of what things they are the "signs;" for we do not condemn that Astronomy[1] which surveys the courses of the planets, in which we ought to acknowledge the wonderful majesty of God. But we condemn men addicted to curiosity, who wish to learn from them how long any government shall last, and what shall befall this city or that people, or even this or that man; for they go beyond limits, and abuse "signs," which were not given for the purpose of being omens of future events. I do acknowledge that we are sometimes warned by heavenly signs, to see that we have provoked the Lord's anger, or that chastisements are hanging over our heads, but not to venture to give minute explanations or conclusions, or to determine those hidden and secret events which we have no right to search and explore. But above all, we ought to observe the cause and origin of impiety; for, as soon as that error prevails, that the life of man is governed by the influence of the stars, the judgment-seat of God is overthrown, so that he is not the judge of the world in inflicting punishments, or in restoring to life by his mercy those who were perishing. They who think that the stars, by their irresistible influence, control the life of men, immediately become hardened to the imagination of destiny, so that they now leave nothing to God. Thus the tribunals of God are buried, and consequently piety is extinguished, and calling on God is altogether at an end.

[1] The Latin word *Astrologia* has a wider signification than the English word *Astrology*; for it sometimes denotes, as it undoubtedly does in this instance, "Astronomy," which belongs to the lawful domains of calculation and science.—*Ed.*

He calls them *wise men*, and speaks of their *knowledge*, by way of admission, because they boasted greatly of the title of "wisdom," when they uttered those things which they had learned from the stars, as if they had been admitted into the counsel of God; and therefore he means that those empty masks of "wisdom" will not hinder the Lord from overturning their whole estate; for all their contrivances and tricks shall be brought to nothing.

26. *Confirming the word.* The Prophet now applies to his purpose what he had formerly said; for, although he spoke in general terms, still he had a specific object in view, to adapt to the circumstances of the present occasion all that he said, that the people might not be alarmed at that pretended wisdom of the Chaldeans, or doubt that God would one day deliver them. With their unfounded predictions, therefore, he contrasts the promises of God, that they might not imagine that that monarchy was free from all danger.

The promise was this, "Babylon shall fall, but my people shall be restored to liberty." (Isa. xxi. 9.) The Babylonians laughed at these promises, "As if we could not foresee by means of the stars what shall happen to us!" On this account the Lord says that he will *confirm*, that is, he will actually fulfil what he has promised, and will accomplish those things which could neither be foreseen nor imagined by those wise men. What the prophets foretold, wicked men treated as an empty sound which would quickly pass away. With this opinion he contrasts the word "confirm" or "raise up," by which he means that God will establish the truth of his words.

Of his servant. By the word "servant" he means all the prophets, if it be not thought better to view it as chiefly denoting Isaiah, who announced and testified this deliverance more clearly than all others. But it is unnecessary to limit it to a single individual, for it related to them all, and he likewise calls them by the ordinary name, "ambassadors" or "messengers" of God, because he had sent many, in order to support by their common and universal consent the faith of his people.

The counsel of his messengers. By the word "counsel" he

means the decrees of God, but not every kind of decrees; for we have no right to inquire about his secret purposes which he does not manifest by his servants, but, when he reveals to us what he will do, we ought to receive the threatenings of the prophets with as much reverence as if God admitted us into the most secret recesses of the heavens. Let not men therefore dispute according to their fancy, after God hath spoken by the mouth of the prophets. In a word, he intended to recommend the authority of his word, which is declared to us by the ministry of men, as if it revealed to us the eternal purpose of God.

Saying to Jerusalem. After having spoken in general terms, the Prophet applies more closely to the present subject that certainty of the promises of God; for otherwise the people could not have obtained any advantage from it; and, therefore, he expressly adds the mention of "Jerusalem," that they may know that it shall be restored. Thus, we ought chiefly to behold in this matter the power of God in determining to defend his Church in a wonderful manner, and to raise her from death to life as often as is necessary. If, therefore, we think that God is true and powerful, let us not doubt that there will always be a Church; and when it appears to be in a lamentably ruinous condition, let us entertain good hope of its restoration. What is here said of "Jerusalem" relates to the whole Church; and, therefore, if we see that she is in a ruinous condition, and that her cities are demolished, and if nothing be visible but frightful and hideous desolation, let us rely on this promise, that she shall at length be raised up and perfectly restored.

27. *Saying to the deep.* This is generally considered to be an allegorical description of Babylon, and I certainly do not deny that it is included; but yet I cannot think of limiting it to Babylon, for I prefer to view it simply as denoting any unexpected change. He shews that some great revolution will be necessary, as if the people must be drawn out of the depths of the sea, but declares that God will easily surmount every obstacle, for he can easily "make the deep dry, and dry up the rivers." In my opinion he rather appears to allude to that former redemption, (Exod. xiv. 29,)

when the Lord brought the people out of Egypt through the Red Sea; as if he had said, "I did this for your fathers, and therefore you ought to hope for the same thing from me, and not to imagine that a return to your native land shall be closed against you."

28. *Saying to Cyrus.* This is a remarkable passage, in which we not only may see the wonderful providence of God, but which likewise contains a striking proof of the truth and certainty of the prophecies. Here "Cyrus" was named long before he was born; for between the death of Manasseh, by whom Isaiah was slain, and the birth of "Cyrus," more than a century intervened. Besides, even though he had been born, who would have conjectured that he should come from the most distant mountains of Persia to Babylon? These things ought therefore to be carefully observed, for they shew clearly that it was not by a human spirit that Isaiah spoke. No one would ever have thought that there would be a person named "Cyrus," who should fly from the most distant and barbarous countries to deliver the people of God.[1]

As to the objection made by infidels, that those things might have been forged by the Jews after they were fulfilled, it is so foolish and absurd that there is no necessity for refuting it. The Jews perused those prophecies, while they were held in captivity, in order that they might cherish in their hearts the hope of deliverance, and would have been entirely discouraged, if the Lord had not comforted them by such promises. These records, therefore, supported the hearts of believers in hope and confidence; and I have no doubt that Cyrus, when he learned that God had appointed him to be the leader and *shepherd* for bringing back Israel, was astonished at those promises, and that they induced him to cherish kind feelings towards the people, so as to supply them with food and with everything that was necessary for their journey. Thus the Lord points out the person by whose hand he has determined to bring back his people, that they may not look around on all sides in perplexity.

Even by saying to Jerusalem. This is the conclusion, by

[1] "Lequel viendroit avec une merveilleuse vistesse." "Who should come with amazing swiftness."

which the former statements are confirmed, that they may rest assured that "Jerusalem" shall infallibly *be built*, and may learn from it how dear and precious they are to God, when they shall see the monarchy of all the east transferred to the Persians. At the same time he points out the end for which Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, namely, that the pure worship of God might be restored; for he does not promise this restoration, that men may seek their own ease or the conveniencies of life, but that the Lord's people may purely and sincerely call upon him without any disturbance. This ought to be carefully observed, for there are many who value more highly their own convenience and external comforts than the honour and worship of God. Hence also Haggai complained bitterly, that all were eager to build their own houses, but almost all gave themselves no concern about the Temple. (Hag. i. 4.) But it was the will of the Lord that men should care most about his house, and that is the import of what the Prophet says,—

And to the temple, Thou shalt be founded. But in the present day he does not thus recommend to us a temple of wood or stone, but living temples of God, which we are; for the Lord hath chosen his habitation in us. (2 Cor. vi. 16.) Such, therefore, are the temples which must be diligently built by the doctrine of the word, that we may lead a holy and righteous life, and may render to God the worship which is due to him; for this is the reason why the Lord wishes that there should be a Church in the world, that the remembrance of his name may not perish.

CHAPTER XLV.

1. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

2. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

1. Sic dicit Iehova Meschiæ suo Cyro, cujus apprehendi dexteram ad subigendas coram eo gentes; itaque lumbos regum dissolvam, ad aperienda coram eo ostia; ideo portæ non claudentur.

2. Ego te præcedam, et tortuosa dirigam, ostia ænea confringam, et vectes ferreos comminuam.

3. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the Lord, which call *thee* by thy name, *am* the God of Israel.

4. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

5. I *am* the Lord, and *there is* none else; *there is* no God besides me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me;

6. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that *there is* none besides me: I *am* the Lord, and *there is* none else.

7. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these *things*.

8. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together: I the Lord have created it.

9. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! *Let* the potsherd *strive* with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

10. Woe unto him that saith unto *his* father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

11. Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons; and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.

12. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

13. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts.

3. Et dabo tibi thesauros tenebrarum, et arcana latebrarum; ut scias quòd ego sim Iehova, vocans te nomine tuo, nempe, Deus Israel.

4. Propter servum meum Iacob, et Israel electum meum, vocabo, inquam, te nomine tuo; cognominabo te, quamvis non noveris me.

5. Ego Iehova, et nullus præter me; non est præter me Deus; accinxi te, utcunque non noveris me.

6. Propterea scient ab ortu solis, et ab occasu, quòd non sit præter me. Ego Iehova, et nemo præter me.

7. Formans lucem, et creans tenebras, faciens pacem, et creans malum; Ego Iehova faciens omnia hæc.

8. Rorate cœli supernè; et nubes stillent justitiam; aperiatur terra; et proveniant salus et justitia; proferat eas simul; Ego Iehova creavi eum.

9. Hei litiganti cum fictore suo! Testa ad testas terræ. An dicet lutum fictori suo, Cur fecisti me? et operi tuo, Non sunt manus.

10. Hei qui dicit patri, Cur genuisti? et mulieri, Cur parturis?

11. Sic dicit Iehova, Sanctus Israel, et fictor ejus; de futuris interrogate me; super filiis meis, et super opere manuum mearum præcipite mihi.

12. Ego feci terram, et hominem super eam creavi; ego cujus manus extenderunt cœlos, et toti militiæ eorum præcepi.

13. Ego excitavi illum in justitia, et omnes vias ejus dirigam. Ipse extruet urbem meam, et captivitatem meam dimittet, non pretio nec munere, dicit Iehova exercituum.

14. Thus saith the Lord, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia, and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee; they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God *is* in thee, and *there is* none else; *there is* no God.

14. Sic dicit Iehova, Labor Ægypti, merces Æthiopiæ, et proceri Sabæi ad te transibunt, et tui erunt; ibunt post te, in compedibus transibunt, et adorabunt, (atque) te obsecrabunt. Utique (*vel*, *tantum*) in te est Deus, et nullus ultrà præter Deum.

15. Verily thou *art* a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

15. Verè tu Deus abscondens te, Deus Israel servator.

16. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together *that are* makers of idols.

16. Pudore afficientur, atque etiam erubescent omnes ipsi; simul cum pudore abibunt omnes fabricatores sculptilium.

17. *But* Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

17. Israel servatus est in Iehova salute æterna; non afficiemini pudore, neque erubescetis usque in secula.

18. For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth, and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I *am* the Lord, and *there is* none else.

18. Quia sic dicit Iehova creans cœlos, ipse Deus fictor terræ, qui fecit eam, paravit eam; non inanem creavit, ad inhabitandum formavit eam; ego Iehova, et nullus præter me.

19. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

19. Non in abscondito loquutus sum, in loco terræ tenebrarum; non frustra dixi semini Iacob, Quærite me; ego Iehova loquens justitiam, annuncians recta.

20. Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save.

20. Congregamini, venite, accedite simul, abjecti (*vel*, *remoti*) Gentium. Nihil intelligunt qui efferunt lignum sculptilis sui, et orant Deum qui non servat.

21. Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the Lord? and *there is* no God else besides me; a just God, and a Saviour: *there is* none besides me.

21. Annunciate, et adducite, etiam consultent simul. Quis audire fecit hoc ab initio, et jam olim nunciavit? Annon ego Iehova? et non est ultra Deus præter me, Deus justus, et servator, non est præter me.

22. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.

22. Respicite ad me, et salvi eritis, omnes fines terræ; quia ego Deus, et non est amplius.

23. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in*

23. Per me juravi; egressum est ex ore meo in justitia verbum, quod

righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

24. Surely, shall *one* say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

25. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

non revertetur, quòd mihi flectetur omne genu, jurabit omnis lingua.

24. Utique in Iehova mihi, dicet, justitiæ et robur; ad eum usque veniet; pudefient autem omnes qui provocant eum.

25. In Iehova justificabuntur, et gloriabuntur, totum semen Israel.

1. *Thus saith Jehovah.* He pursues the subject which he had begun to handle. He shews that not in vain did he promise deliverance to his people, since the manner of it was altogether decreed and appointed by him;[1] for when the question relates to our salvation, we always inquire into the way and manner. Although God frequently chooses to hold us in suspense, and thus conceals from us the method which he has ready at hand, yet, in this instance he indulges the weakness of his people, and explains the method in which he will deliver them.

To Cyrus his anointed. He names the person by whose hand he will bring them back; for, since their faith would be sharply tried by other temptations, he wished in this respect to provide against doubt, that the difficulty of the event might not shake them. And in order to impart greater efficacy to this discourse, he turns to Cyrus himself: "I have chosen thee to be a king to me; I will take hold of thy hand, and will subject the nations to thy authority, so that they shall open up a passage for thee, and voluntarily surrender." These words have greater effect than if the Lord spoke to his people.

Yet it might be thought strange that he calls Cyrus *his Anointed;* for this is the designation which was given to the kings of Israel and Judah, because they represented the person of Christ, who alone, strictly speaking, is "the Lord's Anointed." "The Lord went forth with his Anointed," says Habakkuk, "for the salvation of his people." (Hab. iii. 13.) In the person of David a kingdom had been set up, which professed to be an image and figure of Christ; and

[1] "Estoit decreté et ordonné desia en son conseil." "Was already decreed and appointed in his counsel."

hence also the prophets in many passages call him "David," and "the Son of David." (Ezek. xxxvii. 24, 25.) It was indeed a special anointing, intended to distinguish that priestly kingdom from all heathen kingdoms. Since therefore this title belonged to none but the kings of Judea, it might be thought strange that it is here bestowed on a heathen king and a worshipper of idols; for although he was instructed by Daniel, yet we do not read that he changed his religion. True, he regarded with reverence the God of Israel, and considered him to be the Highest; but he was not prompted by a sincere affection of the heart to worship him, and did not advance so far as to forsake superstitions and idolatries.

Thus God deigns to call him his "Anointed," not by a perpetual title, but because he discharged for a time the office of Redeemer; for he both avenged the Church of God and delivered it from the Assyrians, who were its enemies. This office belongs peculiarly to Christ; and this ordinary appellation of kings ought to be limited to this circumstance, that he restored the people of God to the enjoyment of liberty. This should lead us to observe how highly God values the salvation of the Church, because, for the sake of this single benefit, Cyrus, a heathen man, is called "the Messiah,"[1] or "the Anointed."

Whose right hand I have taken hold of. By this mode of expression, he means that Cyrus shall prosper in all his undertakings, for he shall carry on war under God's direction; and therefore Isaiah declares that, for the sake of the Church, in order that he may deliver her, God will grant to him prosperity in all things; while he again commends the providence of God, that the Jews may fully believe, amidst changes and troubles, that God on high governs all things in such a manner as to promote the benefit of his elect. Now, since it was not easy for Cyrus to penetrate as far as Babylon, because the whole of Asia had leagued together in order to frustrate his designs, the Prophet testifies that God will dissolve all the strength which men can bring against him.

[1] For an explanation of the meaning and use of the term "Messiah," see Harmony of the Evangelists, vol. i. p. 92, n. 2, and p. 142, n. 2.—*Ed.*

I will loose the loins of kings. Because the whole strength lies in the reins, the Hebrew writers use the phrase "opening," or "loosing the loins," to denote "being deprived of strength." We might also view it somewhat differently, that is, that the Lord will "make bare," or "loose their loins," according to the customary manner of Scripture, by which kings are said to be ungirded of the belt, namely, of the badge of royalty, when they are deprived of authority. Job (xii. 18) employs this mode of expression, and Isaiah will afterwards employ it:[1] "I will gird thee." (Ver. 5.) On this account I more readily adopt this sense, that the force of the contrast may be more evident. This shews clearly that kings have just as much strength and power as the Lord bestows on them for the preservation of each nation; for when he determines to convey their authority to others, they cannot defend their condition by any weapons or swords.

To open the gates before him. By this expression he means that no fortresses can resist God, which indeed is acknowledged by all, but yet they do not cease to place foolish confidences in bulwarks and fortresses; for, where cities are well surrounded by walls, and the gates are shut, men think that there they are safe. On the other hand the Prophet shews that all defences are useless, and that it serves no purpose to block up every entrance, when the Lord wishes to open up a way for the enemies. Although it is certain that the gates were shut and securely barred, yet, because Cyrus pushed his way as swiftly as if all the cities had been thrown open, the Prophet justly affirms that nothing shall be closed against him.

2 and 3. *I will go before thee.* These two verses contain nothing new; but, in general, he shews that Cyrus will gain an easy and rapid victory, because he will have the Lord for the leader of his expedition. Accordingly he promises that all *crooked* paths shall be *made straight*, because God will remove every obstruction. Now, since money is the sinews of war, and Cyrus came from the scorched and poor mountains of Persia, Jehovah says that *treasures* which were for-

[1] Our author has already explained this allusion. See Commentary on Isaiah, vol. ii. p. 135.—*Ed.*

merly hidden and concealed shall come into the hands of Cyrus, so that, laden with rich booty, he shall have enough for defraying any expenditure; for by *the treasures of darkness* he means those which lay concealed, and as it were buried in safe and deep places of defence. It is abundantly clear from history, that all these things happened; for by taking Crœsus, king of Lydia, who was at that time the richest of all men, he obtained large sums of money. Nor would any one have expected that he would gain victories so easily; and the reason of so great success is now added, because the Lord called and directed him, that he might give in him an illustrious demonstration of his power; for he adds—

That thou mayest know that I am Jehovah. True, Cyrus, as we formerly said, though he acknowledged that the God of Israel is the true God, and was filled with admiration, yet was not converted to him, and never embraced his pure worship according to the standard of the Law. This was therefore special knowledge, that is, so far as he assisted the Church, for whose deliverance he was appointed; and therefore it was necessary that he should be under the influence of this knowledge, in order that he might execute this work of God. Thus he does not speak of that knowledge by which we are enlightened, or about the Spirit of regeneration, but about special knowledge, such as men destitute of religion[1] may possess.

Calling thee by thy name. From some commentators this mode of expression has received a trivial interpretation, that "before Cyrus was born, God called and described him by his name." But we have seen in a former passage, (Isaiah xliii. 1,) that the Prophet, while he used the same form of expression, meant something different; for God is said to "call by name" those whom he has chosen, and whom he appoints to perform some particular work, that they may be separated from the multitude. This word denotes closer and more familiar intercourse. Thus a shepherd is said to "call his sheep by name," (John x. 3,) because he knows them individually. This applies indeed, in the highest degree, to

[1] "Les profanes et incredules." "Heathens and infidels."

believers, whom God reckons as belonging to his flock, and to the number of the citizens of his Church. God did not bestow this favour on Cyrus; but because, by appointing him to be the leader of so excellent a deliverance, he engraved on him distinguished marks of his power; with good reason is the commendation of an excellent calling applied to him.

The God of Israel. This ought to be carefully observed; for superstitious men ascribe to their idols the victories which they have obtained, and, as Habakkuk (i. 16) says, "They sacrifice every one to his god;" and therefore they wander in their thoughts, and conceive in their hearts any deity that they fancy, while they ought to acknowledge that Jehovah is the only and true God. What is said of Cyrus ought to be much more applied to us, that we may not fashion any knowledge of God according to our fancy, but may distinguish him from idols, so as to embrace him alone, and to know him in Christ alone, apart from whom nothing but an idol, or even a devil can be worshipped. In that respect, therefore, let us surpass Cyrus, to whom the knowledge of God was revealed, so that we may lay aside superstitions and all false worship, and may thus adore him in a holy and upright manner.

4. *For the sake of my servant Jacob.* He shews for what purpose he would grant such happy and illustrious success to this prince. It is, in order that he may preserve his people; as if the Lord had said, "Thou shalt indeed obtain a signal victory, but I will have regard to my own people rather than to thee; for it is for their sake that I subject kings and nations to thy power." By these predictions, indeed, the Lord intended to encourage the hearts of believers, that they might not despair amidst those distresses; but undoubtedly he intended likewise to excite Cyrus to acknowledge that he owed to that nation all that he should accomplish, that he might be more disposed to treat them with all kindness.

And Israel mine elect. In this second clause there is a repetition which serves still farther to explain that reason; and at the same time he shews on what ground he reckons the Israelites to be "his servants." It is because he con-

descended to choose them by free grace ; for it is not in the power of men to make themselves "servants of God," or to obtain so great honour by their own exertions. This clause is therefore added,[1] as before, for the sake of explanation. But still it denotes also the end of election ; for, since we are naturally the slaves of Satan, we are called in order that, being restored to liberty, we may serve God. Yet he shews that no man is worthy of that honour, as we have said, but he whom God hath chosen ; for who will boast that he is worthy of so high an honour, or what can we render or offer to God ? Thus "we are not sufficient of ourselves, but the Lord hath made us sufficient," as Paul says. (2 Cor. iii. 5.) The beginning of our salvation, therefore, is God's election by free grace ; and the end of it is the obedience which we ought to render to him.

But although this is limited to the history of Cyrus, still we may draw from it a general doctrine. When various changes happen in the world, God secures at the same time the salvation of his people, and in the midst of storms wonderfully preserves his Church. We are indeed blind and stupid as to the works of God, yet we ought firmly to believe that, even when everything appears to be driven about at random, and to be tossed up and down, God never forgets his Church, whose salvation, on the contrary, he promotes by hidden methods, so that it is at length seen that he is her guardian and defender.

Josephus relates a memorable narrative about Alexander, who, while he was besieging Tyre, sent ambassadors to Jerusalem, to demand the tribute which the Jews were paying to Darius. Jaddus, the high-priest, who had sworn that he would pay that tribute, would not become subject to Alexander, and refused to pay him the tribute. Alexander was highly offended, and, swelling with pride and fierceness, determined to destroy Jerusalem, and, after having conquered Darius, marched to Jerusalem, for the purpose of consigning it to utter destruction. Jaddus went out to meet him, accompanied by other priests and Levites, wearing the priestly dress ; and Alexander, as soon as he saw him, leapt

[1] "Ce mot d' *elen* est donc adjusté." "This word *elect* is thus added."

from his horse, and threw himself down as a suppliant at his feet. Every person was astonished at a thing so strange and so inconsistent with his natural disposition, and thought that he had lost his senses. Parmenio, who alone of all who were present asked the reason, received a reply, that he did not adore this man, but God, whose servant he was; and that, before he left Dion, a city of Macedonia, a man of that appearance and dress, who appeared to have the form of God, presented himself to him in a dream, encouraged him to take Asia, and promised to be the leader of the army, so that he ought to entertain no doubt of victory, and therefore that he could not but be powerfully affected by seeing him. In this manner, therefore, was Jerusalem rescued from the jaws of that savage highwayman who aimed at nothing else than fire and bloodshed, and even obtained from him greater liberty than before, and likewise gifts and privileges.[1]

I have quoted this example in order to shew that the Church of God is preserved in the midst of dangers by strange and unusual methods. Those were troublous times, and scarcely a corner of the earth was at rest; but above all other countries Judea might be said to be devoted to destruction. Yet behold the Church rescued in a wonderful and unusual manner, while other nations are destroyed, and nearly the whole world has changed its face!

And yet thou hast not known me. These words are added for the purpose of giving greater force to the statement, not only that Cyrus may learn that this is not granted on account of any of his own merits, but that he may not despise the God of Israel, though he does not know him. The Lord frequently, indeed, reminds us on this subject, that he anticipates all the industry that exists in men, in order that he may beat down all the pride of the flesh. But there is another reason, as regards Cyrus; for if he had thought that the Lord granted those things for his own sake, he would have disregarded the Jews and treated them as despicable slaves. For this reason the Lord testifies that it does not happen on account of Cyrus's own merit, but only for the sake of the people, whom he determines to rescue out of the hands

[1] Joseph. Ant., Book xi. chap. viii.

of enemies. Besides, nothing was more probable than that this man, in his blindness, would appropriate to his idols that which belonged to the true God; because, being entirely under the influence of wicked superstitions, he would not willingly have given place to a strange and unknown God, if he had not been instructed by this prediction.

5. *I am Jehovah.* He confirms the preceding statement, and the repetition is not superfluous; for it was proper that it should be often repeated to Cyrus, that there is one God, by whose hands all rulers and nations are governed, that he might be drawn aside from all delusions and be converted to the God of Israel. Besides, it is clearly stated that we ought not to try to find divinity in any other; as if he had said, "Beware of ascribing this victory to idols, or forming any confused idea of a god such as men imagine; know that the God of Israel is the only author of this victory." Although Cyrus did not profit by this admonition to such an extent as to leave his idols and devote himself to the true God, yet it made so deep an impression on his heart that he acknowledged Jehovah to be God and to possess the highest authority. At the same time, it was proper that they who were members of the Church should embrace this doctrine, that they might boldly despise all pretended gods.

I have girded thee. That girding corresponds to the nakedness which he formerly mentioned, (verse 1,) when he said that he "opened" or "ungirded the loins of kings;" for he is said to "gird" those whom he supplies with strength and courage and renders victorious. Hence it ought to be inferred, that men have no courage but when the Lord imparts to them his power and strength, that neither weapons nor any military force can do anything unless he assist, and, in a word, that he presides over all wars, and gives victory to whomsoever he pleases, that none may think that it happens by chance. He again repeats, *Though thou hast not known me,* in order to make it still more certain that these things are granted to Cyrus for the sake of the Church, in order that he may give evidence that he remembers it with gratitude, and may shew kindness to the people of God in return for such a distinguished favour.

6. *Therefore they shall know.* He means that this favour shall be so remarkable as to be acknowledged and admired by all nations. This was not indeed immediately fulfilled; for, although the fame of that victory was spread far and wide, yet few understood that the God of Israel was the author of it; but it was immediately made known to the neighbours, and was communicated by one nation to another, till the report of it was spread throughout the whole world. He does not predict what shall happen immediately, but what shall happen afterwards, though these things were long concealed. God therefore did not permit the remembrance of this transaction to fade away, but determined that it should be handed down in permanent records, that it might be celebrated in all ages, and by the most distant nations, to the very end of the world. We must therefore remember what I formerly remarked, that the Prophet interweaves earlier and later events, because the return of the people was the prelude to a future redemption, and that he thus speaks of a perfect restoration of the Church. Besides, when it happens that the illustrious works of God are buried by the ingratitude and malice of men, still it does not cease to be true, that they shall be visible to the whole world; for they shine openly and brightly, though the blind do not see them.

7. *Forming light.* As if he had said, that they who formerly were wont to ascribe everything either to fortune or to idols shall acknowledge the true God, so as to ascribe power and the government and glory of all things, to him alone. He does not speak of perfect knowledge, though this intelligence is requisite for the attainment of it. But since the Prophet says that it shall be manifest even to heathens, that everything is directed and governed by the will of God, they who bear the Christian name ought to be ashamed, when they strip him of his power, and bestow it on various governors, whom they have formed according to their fancy, as we see done in Popery; for God is not acknowledged when a bare and empty name is given to him, but when we ascribe to him full authority.

Making peace, and creating evil. By the words "light"

and "darkness" he describes metaphorically not only peace and war, but adverse and prosperous events of any kind; and he extends the word *peace*, according to the custom of Hebrew writers, to all success and prosperity. This is made abundantly clear by the contrast; for he contrasts "peace" not only with war, but with adverse events of every sort. Fanatics torture this word *evil*, as if God were the author of evil, that is, of sin; but it is very obvious how ridiculously they abuse this passage of the Prophet. This is sufficiently explained by the contrast, the parts of which must agree with each other; for he contrasts "peace" with "evil," that is, with afflictions, wars, and other adverse occurrences. If he contrasted "righteousness" with "evil," there would be some plausibility in their reasonings, but this is a manifest contrast of things that are opposite to each other. Consequently, we ought not to reject the ordinary distinction, that God is the author of the "evil" of punishment, but not of the "evil" of guilt.

But the Sophists are wrong in their exposition; for, while they acknowledge that famine, barrenness, war, pestilence, and other scourges, come from God, they deny that God is the author of calamities, when they befall us through the agency of men. This is false and altogether contrary to the present doctrine; for the Lord raises up wicked men to chastise us by their hand, as is evident from various passages of Scripture. (1 Kings xi. 14, 23.) The Lord does not indeed inspire them with malice, but he uses it for the purpose of chastising us, and exercises the office of a judge, in the same manner as he made use of the malice of Pharaoh and others, in order to punish his people. (Exod. i. 11 and ii. 23.) We ought therefore to hold this doctrine, that God alone is the author of all events; that is, that adverse and prosperous events are sent by him, even though he makes use of the agency of men, that none may attribute it to fortune, or to any other cause.

8. *Drop down dew from above.* Some think that a form of prayer is here added, which it was the duty of believers to use while they were waiting for the redemption which is here described; and they connect this verse with the pre-

ceding in the following manner, "The Lord will not so speedily deliver you, but still it is your duty to be diligently employed in prayer." But I interpret it differently in this manner. TheProphet always speaks in the name of God, who, in the exercise of his authority, calls on heaven and earth to lend their services to the restoration of the Church.

This verse is fitted very powerfully to confirm the godly in the hope of future redemption; for the people, wherever they looked, saw nothing but despair. If they turned their eyes towards heaven, there they beheld the wrath of God; if towards the earth, there also were beheld afflictions and chastisements; and therefore nothing fitted to lead them to entertain favourable hope was visible. On this account the Prophet confirms them, and enjoins heaven and earth, which held out nothing but threatenings and terrors, to bring forth salvation and "righteousness." This is more emphatic than if he promised that it shall be, when all the elements, which are ready to yield obedience to God, receive orders as to what he wishes them to do. And thus the stream of the discourse will flow on continuously, which otherwise will be abruptly broken off, if we understand this passage to be a prayer.[1]

And let the clouds drop righteousness. This form of expression is frequently employed in Scripture; such as, "And the mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the hills righteousness." (Psalm lxxii. 3.) And again, "Piety and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other; truth shall spring from the earth, and righteousness looked down from heaven;" where David describes the kingdom of Christ and its prosperity, and shews that in it "righteousness, peace, mercy, and truth, shall be joined together." (Psalm lxxxv. 10, 11.) This passage treats of the same subject. There is an allusion to the ordinary food of men, who subsist on bread and other productions of the soil; for their life needs such aids. Now, in order that the

[1] "This is what is usually called 'a prophetic imperative,' which supplies the place of the future tense; for the prophets command those things to be done which they promise, and which they know will certainly happen. Thus Elisha said to Naaman, 'Wash thee seven times in Jordan, and be thou clean;' that is, 'And thou shalt be clean.' (2 Kings v. 10.) See also Isaiah xxiii. 1, and xxvi. 19."—*Rosenmüller.*

earth may bring forth fruits, it must obtain its vigour from heaven and draw water from the clouds, that it may be rendered fertile, and then bring forth herbs and fruits both for men and for animals.

By the word *righteousness* he means nothing else than the fidelity with which the Lord defends and preserves his people. The Lord thus "drops down from heaven righteousness," that is, well established order, of which salvation is the fruit; for he speaks of the deliverance of the people from Babylon, in which the Lord shews that he will be their protector. Yet while we understand the natural meaning of the Prophet, we must come down to the kingdom of Christ, to which these words undoubtedly bear a spiritual import; for God does not limit these promises to a few years, but continues his favours down to the coming of Christ, in whom all these things were abundantly fulfilled. There can be no doubt, therefore, that he likewise celebrates that eternal righteousness and salvation which is brought to us by Christ; but we ought first to observe that simple interpretation about the return from the captivity in Babylon.

9 and 10. *Wo to him that striveth with his Maker!* This passage is explained in various ways. Some think that it refers to King Belshazzar, who, as is evident from Daniel, haughtily defied God, when he profaned the vessels of the Temple. (Dan. v. 3.) But that is too forced an exposition. The second might appear to be more probable, that the Lord grants far more to his children than a man would grant to his sons, or an artisan to his work; for they suppose that a comparison of this kind is made. "If the son rise up against the father, and debate with him, he will not be listened to. The father will choose to retain his power, and deservedly will restrain his son; and in like manner, if the clay rise up against the workman. But the Lord permits questions to be put to him, and kindly offers to satisfy the people; nay, even bids them put questions to him." And thus they join together the 10th and 11th verses, and think that God's forbearance is manifested by treating us with greater kindness, and condescending to greater familiarity, than men usually exhibit towards their sons.

The latter exposition is indeed more plausible, but both are at variance with the Prophet's meaning; and therefore a more simple view appears to me to be, to understand that the Prophet restrains the complaints of men, who in adversity murmur and strive with God. This was a seasonable warning, that the Jews, by patiently and calmly bearing the cross, might receive the consolation which was offered to them; for whenever God holds us in suspense, the flesh prompts us to grumble, "Why does he not do more quickly what he intends to do? Of what benefit is it to him to torture us by his delay?" The Prophet, therefore, in order to chastise this insolence, says, "Does the potsherd dispute with the potter? Do sons debate with their fathers? Has not God a right to treat us as he thinks fit? What remains but that we shall bear patiently the punishments which he inflicts on us? We must therefore allow God to do what belongs to him, and must not take anything from his power and authority." I consider הוי, (*hōi,*) *Wo!* to be an interjection expressive of reproof and chastisement.

Potsherd to potsherds. That is, as we say in common language, (*Que chacun se prenne à son pareil,*) "Let each quarrel with his like," "Let potsherds strive with potsherds of the earth."[1] When he sends men to those who are like themselves, he reproves their rashness and presumption, in not considering that it is impossible to maintain a dispute with God without leading to destruction; as if he had said, "With whom do they think that they have to deal? Let them know that they are not able to contend with God,[2] and that at length they must yield. And if, unmindful of their frailty, they attack heaven after the manner of the giants, they shall at length feel that they did wrong in warring[3] with their Maker, who can without any difficulty break in pieces, and even crush into powder, the vessels which he has made.

[1] "It seems to be a just observation of Hitzig, that *earth* is not mentioned as the dwelling of the potsherd, but as its material, which is indeed the predominant usage of אדמה, (*ădāmāh,*) as distinguished from ארץ, (*ĕrĕtz.*)"—*Alexander.*

[2] "Que Dieu sera plus fort qu' eux." "That God will be stronger than they."

[3] "Qu' ils ont eu tort de guerroyer."

Some interpret חרשׂים (*chārāsim*) to mean "workmen" or "potters," and suppose the meaning to be, "Shall the potsherd rise up against the potter?" But those interpreters change the point and read שׂ (*schin*) instead of שׁ (*sin*). I acknowledge that such diversity and change may easily occur, but I prefer to follow the ordinary reading, and to adopt this simple meaning, "*Shall the clay say to its maker?* A potter is allowed to make any vessel of what form he pleases, a father is allowed to command his sons; will you not admit that God possesses a higher right?" Thus he reproves those who in adversity remonstrate with God, and cannot patiently endure afflictions.

We ought therefore to listen to the warning given by Peter, when he bids us learn to submit to God, and to "humble ourselves under his mighty hand," (1 Peter v. 6,) so as to yield to his authority, and not to strive with him, if he sometimes tries us by various afflictions; because we ought to acknowledge his just right to govern us according to his pleasure. If we must come to debate, he will have such strong and decisive arguments as shall constrain us, being convicted, to be dumb. And when he restrains the insolence of men, it is not because he is destitute of argument, but because it is right and proper that we should yield and surrender ourselves to be wholly governed according to his pleasure; but at the same time he justly claims this right, that his own creatures should not call him to render an account. What can be more detestable than not to approve of his judgments, if they do not please men?

Paul makes use of the same metaphor, but on a higher subject; for he argues about God's eternal predestination, and rebukes the foolish thoughts of men, who debate with God why he chooses some, and reprobates and condemns others. He shews that we ought, at least, to allow to God as much power as we allow to a potter or workman; and therefore he exclaims, "O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the clay say to the potter, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. ix. 20.) "Who is so daring as to venture to oppose God, and to enter into debate with him?" Thus he perfectly agrees with the Prophet, though

he makes use of this metaphor on a different and more intricate subject; for both affirm that God has full power over men, so as to permit themselves to be ruled and governed by him, and to endure patiently all adverse events. There is only this difference, that Isaiah reasons about the course of the present life, but Paul ascends to the heavenly and eternal life.

His work hath no hands. The Prophet speaks in ordinary language, as we say that one "puts the last hand," when a thing is completed, and that "hands are wanting," when a work is disorderly, confused, or imperfect. Thus, whenever men murmur against God for not complying with their wishes, they accuse him either of slothfulness or of ignorance.

11. *Thus saith Jehovah.* I have already said, that I do not agree with those who connect this verse with the preceding, as if God, abandoning his just right, gave permission to the Jews to put questions more than is allowed among men. There is another meaning not much different, that the Israelites are miserable, because they know not, and do not even wish to know, the will of the Lord; that they do not seek and even do not accept of consolation; and, in short, that the deep sorrow with which they are oppressed arises from the fault of the people, that is, because they do not ask at the mouth of the Lord. If we adopt this exposition, we must arrive at the conclusion that this passage treats of a different kind of inquiry; for as it is unlawful to thrust ourselves into the secret decrees of God, so he graciously condescends to make known to his people, as far as is necessary, what he intends to do; and, when he opens his sacred mouth, he justly commands us to open our ears to him, and to hear attentively whatever he declares. Now, we also know by experience that which Isaiah brings as a reproach against the ancient people.

But it is more reasonable to view this statement as depending on the preceding, so as to be an application of the metaphor in this sense: "A son will not be allowed to enter into a dispute with his father, and the clay will not be permitted to strive with its potter; how much more intolerable is this liberty which men take, when they prescribe to God

in what manner he ought to treat his sons?" For otherwise this sentence would be broken and imperfect, but those two clauses agree beautifully with each other. "The potter will make clay of any shape according to his pleasure, the son of a mortal man will not venture to expostulate with his father; and will you refuse to me, who am the supreme Father and Maker of all things, to have equal power over my sons and my creatures?" If the former meaning be preferred, the Prophet reproaches men with their slothfulness, in not deigning to put questions to God, and to learn from his mouth those things which related to their consolation; for they might have learned from the prophecies that God took care of them, and might have known the conclusion of their distresses. And indeed there is no better remedy in adversity than to ask at the mouth of God, so as not to fix our eyes on the present condition of things, but to embrace with the heart that future salvation which the Lord promises. "The Lord is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear; but with the temptation will also grant deliverance, and will increase his grace in us." (1 Cor. x. 13.)

Command ye me. This must not be understood as denoting authority; for it does not belong to us to "command" God, or to press upon him unseasonably; and it will not be possible for any person to profit by the word of God, who does not bring an humble heart.[1] But God presents himself to us, that we may ask from him what is of importance to us to know; as if he had said, "Order me; I am ready to reveal those things which are of the highest importance for you to know, that you may derive consolation from them." But as that would be an unnatural mode of expression, I consider that the complaint which I have stated is more simple, that God is robbed of a father's right, if he do not retain the absolute and uncontrolled government of his Church. Thus, in the clause, *Ask me of things to come*, the word *ask* is taken in a bad sense, when men, forgetting modesty, do not hesitate to summon God to their bar, and to demand a reason for anything that he has done. This is

[1] "Un esprit humble et modeste." "An humble and modest mind."

still more evident from the word *command;* as if he had said, "It will belong to you, forsooth, to prescribe what shape I ought to give to my work!"

In a word, the Prophet's design is to exhort men to moderation and patience; for, as soon as they begin to dispute with him, they endeavour to drag him from his heavenly throne. Now, he does not address the Jews alone, for he needed to restrain the blasphemies which even at that time were current among infidels. It is as if God, wishing to maintain his right, thus refuted the slanders of the whole world: "How far shall your insolence carry its excesses, that you will not allow me to be master in my own workshop, or to govern my family as I think fit?"

12. *I made the earth.* He appears merely to maintain the power of God, as he had formerly done; so that there is an indirect contrast between God and idols, which superstitious persons worship. Foolish men ask counsel of idols, as if the world were governed at their pleasure. On the contrary, God calls us back to himself, when he says that he "made the earth, and placed man upon it, and that his hands stretched out the heavens." (Gen. i. 1, 6, 26.) But it will be more appropriate, in my opinion, to apply the whole of this discourse to the nature of the present subject. "Can anything be more foolish than that men shall uphold their own rank, and shall haughtily interrogate, and treat as a criminal, God, whose majesty is above the heavens?" Thus he indirectly censures the madness of men, who do not scruple to exalt themselves above the very heavens. Yet at the same time he reminds them that, if it must come to a strict examination, God will not want arguments to defend his cause; for, if he governs the whole world, he undoubtedly takes a peculiar care about his own people, and does not care for strangers, so as to allow the members of his family to be scattered and wander. Thus, then, I understand this verse. "Shall I, whose vast and inconceivable wisdom and power shine brightly in heaven and earth, not only be bound by human laws, but be degraded below the ordinary lot of men? And if there be any doubts of my justice, shall not I, who rule and govern all things by my hand, be careful of

those whom I have adopted into my family? Shall I not watch over their salvation?"

Thus it is an argument from the less to the greater, and this meaning is agreeable to Scripture. We know that we have been adopted by God, in such a manner that, having been received under his protection, we are guarded by his hand; and none can hurt us, but by his permission. If "a sparrow," as Christ tells us, "does not fall to the ground without his permission," (Matt. x. 29,) shall we whom he values more than the sparrows be exposed by him at hazard to the rage and cruelty of enemies? And, therefore, since God upholds all the creatures by his providence, he cannot disregard the Church, which he prefers to the whole world. We must, therefore, betake ourselves to this providence, even in the most desperate affairs, and must not give way to any temptations by which Satan attacks us in various ways.

13. *I have raised him up.* He now continues the subject on which he had entered in the beginning of the chapter; for, having undertaken to soothe their affliction, which was exceedingly sharp and severe, Isaiah holds out the hope of deliverance, and stretches out his hand to them, that they may look for an absolutely certain redemption. Though you think that you are ruined, yet the Lord will protect you against destruction. Why the reproof which we have seen was intermingled with it, may be easily gathered from the event itself; for, if Isaiah had not abruptly made this digression, the Jews, in their vehement impatience, would have been hurried into despair.

In righteousness. This means "justly and truly," and must be understood relatively; for it assigns the reason why God determined to raise up Cyrus, that is, because he is a faithful guardian of his Church, and does not disappoint his worshippers. Some explain it, "in justice," that is, in order that he may punish the Babylonians; and others, "that he may reign justly;" but the Prophet meant nothing of this sort. But in the Scriptures, "righteousness" often signifies fidelity, (Ps. v. 8; xxii. 31,) because the Lord manifests his "righteousness" by fulfilling his promises and defending his servants. The "righteousness" of God shines brightly in giving a dis-

play of exalted and perfect rectitude by saving his people; for, although there is no work of God on which a mark of righteousness is not engraven, yet a much more clear and striking proof is seen in the salvation of the Church. The meaning therefore is, that he "raised up" Cyrus, in order to manifest his "righteousness" in him, whom he has appointed to lead and conduct in bringing back his people.

He shall build my city. Jerusalem is meant, which he calls "his city," because he wished that there the remembrance of his name should be preserved, and because he had consecrated it in a peculiar manner to himself. In like manner God himself had declared, "Wherever I shall cause my name to be recorded, I will come to thee, and will bless thee." (Exod. xx. 24.) Now, there was no other city which he had appointed for sacrifices and vows, and for calling on his name; and, therefore, also it is called (Ps. xlvi. 4, 5) "The city of God, the holy tabernacle of the Most High, for God is in the midst of her;" and in another place it is said, "This is my rest for ever and ever." (Ps. cxxxii. 14.) Now, Cyrus did not build this city with his own hand, but by royal edicts forbade any one to hinder the rebuilding of it, and likewise supplied the people with provisions and money. (2 Chron. xxxvi. 23; Ezra i. 2; vi. 3.)

And shall release my captivity, not for a price, that is, "for nothing." This was uncommon; for, if captives are released by a conqueror, either a price is demanded, or harsh conditions are imposed on them; but Cyrus did nothing of that kind. Hence it follows that this deliverance took place by the will of God, and not by the will of man. The word "captivity" is here used as a collective noun, denoting "captives."

14. *Thus saith Jehovah.* He still speaks of the restoration which was afterwards effected under the conduct of Cyrus; but we must keep in remembrance what we formerly remarked, that those promises must be extended farther; for it includes the whole time which followed, down to the coming of Christ. Whoever shall duly consider and weigh this Prophet's ordinary style will find in his words nothing extravagant, and will not look upon his language as exaggerated.

The labour of Egypt, the merchandise of Ethiopia. The Prophet alludes to the expenses which Cyrus contributed for building and adorning the temple. (Ezra vi. 8.) At that time was fulfilled what he says, that "the labour of Egypt" and "the merchandise of Ethiopia" came to the Jews; for "Egypt and Ethiopia" were tributaries and subjects of the king of Persia. From those tributes the temple of Jerusalem was rebuilt. But as that restoration was only the prelude to that which was accomplished by Christ, so likewise the homage which foreign nations rendered to the people of God was only the beginning of that homage which various nations rendered to the Church of God, after Christ had been revealed to the world.

Now, under the name of "Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Sabeans," who flourished at that time, he includes also the rest of the nations. It is as if he had said, "You are now oppressed by the tyranny of foreign nations, but the time shall one day come when they shall be subject to you." This was not immediately fulfilled, but only at the time when Christ, by his coming, subdued their flinty and hitherto untameable hearts, so that they mildly submitted to the yoke that was laid upon them. But the Lord redeemed his people from Babylon, in order that he might preserve some Church till the coming of Christ, to whose authority all nations should be subject; and therefore we need not wonder, if the Prophet, when speaking of the return of the people, directs his discourse at the same time to God's end and design, and makes it to be one redemption.

In chains they shall pass over. When he says that the Israelites shall be victorious over all the nations, this depends on the mutual relation between the Head and the members. Because the Only-begotten Son of God unites to himself those who believe in him, so that they are one with him, it frequently happens that what belongs to him is attributed to "the Church, which is his body and fulness." (Eph. i. 23.) In this sense also government is ascribed to the Church, not so as to obscure by haughty rule the glory of her Head, or even to claim the authority which belongs to him, or, in a word, so as to have anything separate from her Head; but

because the preaching of the gospel, which is committed to her, is the spiritual sceptre of Christ, by which he displays his power. In this respect no man can bow down submissively before Christ, without also obeying the Church, so far as the obedience of faith is joined to the ministry of doctrine, yet so that Christ their Head alone reigns, and alone exercises his authority.

Surely[1] *God is in thee.* He relates what will be said by those who shall make respectful entreaties to the Church. They will acknowledge that "God is in her." Some translate אַךְ (*ăch*) *only*, which I do not object to, and even acknowledge to be well adapted to express the Prophet's meaning; yet it will not be inappropriate to explain it affirmatively, *Surely God is in thee.*

And there is none besides God.[2] He explains the manner in which foreign nations shall be subject to the Jews; that is, by acknowledging that there is no other God than He whom the Jews worshipped. If it be objected, that this has nothing to do with the Jews, who are now alienated from the Church, I reply, The gospel nevertheless proceeded from them, and was diffused throughout the whole world; and thus we acknowledge Jerusalem to be the fountain from which pure doctrine flowed. (Ps. lxxvi. 2; Luke xxiv. 47.) In ancient times there undoubtedly were none but the Jews who understood who is God, and what is the proper manner of worshipping him; the rest were devoted to trifles and delusions, and worshipped their own inventions. Hence also Christ, addressing the Samaritan woman, says, "We know what we worship." (John iv. 22.) Justly, therefore, is it here said, "God is in thee," because other nations were ignorant of God. Yet as there is an implied contrast, I cheerfully admit the adverb *only*, so as to be a testimony of the repentance of the Gentiles, when they are satisfied with the one God and forsake their idols.

The meaning may be thus summed up, "They who formerly were haughty, and with lofty brow despised the Church, shall submit to her, when it shall be known that she is the

[1] "Seulement." "Only."

[2] "N'y en a point d'autre que Dieu." "There is no other than God."

sanctuary of the true God," for, as we have said, when God extols his Church, he does not relinquish his own authority. And this is a sign of true conversion, that we do not worship a God whom we have imagined, but him who is acknowledged in the Church. We ought also to observe this encomium pronounced on the Church, "God is in thee;" for, as we formerly quoted, "God is in the midst of her," because he hath chosen her to be his habitation. (Ps. xlvi. 5.) If we are the people of God, and are subject to his doctrine which bringeth salvation, it follows that he will assist us; because he does not wish to forsake his people; for this promise is perpetual, and ought not to be viewed as referring solely to that time.

15. *Truly thou art a God that hidest thyself.* Isaiah now exclaims, that there is need of long exercise of patience, that we may enjoy the promises of God; for the people might have been prompted to despair, when the wicked had everything to their wish, and when everything adverse befell themselves. I am aware that some expound it differently. The Jewish writers commonly interpret it to mean, that the Lord will hide himself from the Gentiles, but will reveal himself to his people. Christian interpreters bring forward a different sense, but too far-fetched. There is ingenuity, indeed, in what they say, that Christ is a hidden God, because his divinity lies concealed under the infirmity of the flesh. But it does not agree with the Prophet's meaning; for he calls himself "a hidden God," because he appears to withdraw,[1] and, in some measure, to conceal himself, when he permits his people to be afflicted and oppressed by various calamities; and, therefore, our hearts ought to be encouraged by hope. Now, as Paul says, (Rom. viii. 24,) "hope is not directed to those things which are seen;" and in this sense Isaiah calls him "a hidden God," because those things which he promised are not immediately visible to our eyes.

[1] "By a reference to the human form (ἀνθρωπομορφῶς) God is said, in the ordinary language of Scripture, to *hide himself*, when he refuses assistance, does not answer prayers, and withdraws himself, that is, withdraws his power from the wishes of men. There is, as Hensler has justly observed, a beautiful contrast between מסתתר, (*mĕstăttēr,*) *hiding*, and מושיע, (*mōshīăng,*) *saving*."—*Doederlein.*

Thus he intended that we should withdraw our minds from present objects, and raise them above the heavens, which we must do,[1] if we wish to receive and accept of his aid. There is "need of patience," (Heb. x. 36,) therefore, that we may continue to direct our desires towards him, when he delays the execution of his promises. He had said, a little before, that unbelievers, though at that time they were blind and stupid, would feel the presence of God; but, because the time of manifestation was not yet at hand, this exclamation is appropriately introduced, that God, before he displays his glory, conceals his power in order to try our faith.

God the Saviour of Israel. That the Prophet does not speak of the essence of God, but of his assistance, may be easily inferred from the epithet which is now added, when he calls God "the Saviour." He explains that God "hides himself" in the method which he takes for saving his Church, because he conceals his hand for a time in such a manner as if he had intended totally to abandon them. He wishes that our salvation should remain, as it were, hidden in darkness, that, if we desire to enjoy it, we may know that we must go out of this world,[2] for it will not all at once present itself to us, or become visible to our eyes. We ought, therefore, to look for it with unshaken steadfastness; for it is highly advantageous that in this manner God should try and prove our faith, that, when we shall be oppressed by various afflictions on every hand, we may nevertheless rely on God and on his promises.

16 and 17. *They shall all be put to shame.* Here the Prophet compares the Jews with the Gentiles, in order to meet a grievous and dangerous temptation, by which they might be assailed, when they saw the Gentiles enjoying prosperity;[3] for, amidst so great troubles, they might have suspected that God was favourable to the Gentiles, or that he had cast away the care of his people, or that everything was governed by the blind impulse of fortune. The Prophet, therefore, assures

[1] "Ce qu'aussi nous devons faire." [2] "Hors de ce monde."
[3] "En voyant les Gentils avoir toutes choses à souhait." "When they saw the Gentiles have everything to their wish."

them that, although for a time the Gentiles flourish and appear to be exalted to heaven,[1] yet the result must be, that they shall perish and Israel shall be saved. In a word, he exhorts them not to judge of the power of God from the present condition of things, not to have their minds fixed on temporary happiness, but to raise them to eternal salvation, and, when struck by the hand of God, patiently to bear their condition, and, on the other hand, not to envy the prosperity of the wicked, which shall be followed by a mournful reverse, as it is excellently described by the Psalmist. (Ps. xxxvii. 1, 2.)

This statement is added to the preceding; for whoever shall know that God, when he is a "Saviour," is "hidden," will not wonder that wicked men enjoy prosperity, and that good men are poor, and despised, and tried by various afflictions. Thus the Lord makes trial of our faith and patience, and yet no part of our eternal salvation is lost; but they who now appear to be a thousand times safe and happy shall at length perish, and all the wealth which they possess shall plunge them in deeper ruin; because they abuse God's benefits, and, like robbers, seize on what belongs to other men, even though they appear to possess all of them by a just title. Whenever, therefore, this thought arises in our minds, "Wicked men are at ease, and therefore God favours them, and the promises on which we rely are unworthy of credit;" let us betake ourselves to this declaration of the Prophet as the surest anchor, and let us fortify ourselves by it, "The Lord will not disappoint our expectation, but we shall at length be delivered, even though we be now exposed to the reproaches, slanders, mockings, and cruelty of the wicked."

18. *For thus saith Jehovah.* This verse tends to confirm the preceding; for the Prophet means that the Jews are fully convinced that the Lord will at length deliver them, though they are oppressed by wretched bondage.

God the maker of the earth. Some think that by "the earth" is here meant Judea, but I consider it to be an argument from the less to the greater, as we said formerly on the twelfth verse, that, since the providence of God extends uni-

[1] "Et semblent estre elevees jusqu' au ciel."

versally to the creatures, much more does it relate to those whom he has adopted to be his sons; for of them he has a special care. In short, the Prophet's argument is this. "Since God created the earth, that men might have an abode and habitation in it, much more did he create it, that there might be a residence for his Church; for he takes a deeper concern about his Church than about all the rest." If, therefore, he founded the earth, if he gave to it a shape and a fixed use, that men might be nourished by the fruits which it should produce, he has undoubtedly assigned to his children the first place and the highest rank of honour. This is not always visible to our eyes, and therefore our hearts ought to be encouraged and upheld by hope, that we may stand unmoved against all temptations.

In a word, as long as the earth shall endure, so long shall the Church of God exist; so long as the sun and moon shall last, it shall not fail. Afterwards the Prophet will use a still stronger argument. "If the covenant which God made with Noah, as to the settled order of this world, is stable, much more the covenant which he hath made concerning the Church must be stable. (Is. liv. 9; Gen. ix. 9.) The world is fading and corruptible; but the Church, that is, the kingdom of Christ, shall be eternal; and therefore it is reasonable to believe that the promises which relate to the Church shall undoubtedly be more stable and permanent than all the rest.

He did not create it empty. As it is the principal ornament of the earth that it is the abode of inhabitants, he adds, that it was not created in order that, by being empty, it might be waste and desolate. If it be objected, on the other hand, that the earth was "empty and void" when it was created, as appears from that passage in which Moses employs the same word that is here used by the Prophet, תֹהוּ, (*tōhū*,) which means "shapeless and empty," the answer is easy. The Prophet does not speak of the commencement of the creation, but of God's purpose by which the earth was set apart for the use and habitation of men; and therefore, there is nothing here that is contrary to what is said by Moses, for Isaiah contemplates the end and use.

He formed it to be inhabited. This statement indeed extends to all mankind, because the earth was appointed to all, that they might dwell in it; for how comes it that God nourishes us and supplies us with everything that is necessary, and even supports wicked men, but because he intended that his decree should stand, by which he gave the earth to be inhabited by men? In any other point of view, it is strange that he bears with so many sins and crimes, and does not entirely destroy mankind; but he has regard to his own purpose, and not to our merit. Hence kingdoms and commonwealths are sustained, and hence ranks of society and forms of government are preserved even amidst barbarians and infidels; for, although God often reduces some countries to desolation on account of the sins of men, and sprinkles them, as it were, with "saltness," (Ps. cvii. 34,[1]) that they may become barren, and may never again be able to support their inhabitants, yet he always adds this alleviation, "that the earth may be inhabited;" for this is his inviolable decree. Yet we must bear in remembrance what I have already said, that, so long as the earth shall be inhabited, it is impossible that God shall not support his worshippers who call upon him. Besides, from this passage all good men ought to derive the highest consolation, that, although they are despised by the world and are few and feeble, and although, on the other hand, wicked men surpass them in numbers, and power, and influence, while they are despised so as to be reckoned of less value than "the offscourings of the world," (1 Cor. iv. 13,) yet they are precious in the sight of God, because he reckons them in the number of his children, and will never suffer them to perish.

I am Jehovah. When he repeats that he is God, this is not intended merely to assert his essence, but to distinguish him from all idols, and to keep the Jews in the pure faith; for even superstitious men acknowledge that there is one God, but conceive of him according to their fancy; and

[1] It may be necessary to remind the reader, that, in the passage alluded to, the word commonly rendered "barrenness" literally means "saltness." On this point our author's version and commentary, and the editor's instructive note, may be consulted with advantage. *See* Com. on the Psalms, vol. iv. p. 260.—*Ed.*

therefore we must acknowledge God, who revealed himself to the fathers, and who spoke by Moses. Thus, he does not speak merely of God's eternal essence, as some think, but of all the offices which belong to him alone, that no part of them may be ascribed to creatures.

19. *Not in secret have I spoken.* He now recalls the people to the doctrine of the Law, because God cannot be comprehended by human faculties; but as he is concealed from carnal reason, so he abundantly reveals himself, and affords the remedy, by his word, which supplies what was wanting, that we may not desire anything more. If this had not been granted, we should have had no hope, and should have lost all courage. Now, he solemnly declares that he does not invite us *in vain*, though he delay his assistance; for what he has promised is most certain, and, as he plainly shewed to whom we ought to betake ourselves, and on whom we ought to rely, so he will give practical demonstration that the hope of those who relied on his word was not *vain*, or without foundation.

This enables us to see clearly how wicked are the speeches of those who say that no certainty can be obtained from the word, and who pretend that it is a nose of wax, in order to deter others from reading it; for thus do wicked men blaspheme, because the mere doctrine of the word exposes and refutes their errors. But we reply with David, "Thy word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths." (Psalm cxix. 105.) We reply with Isaiah and the rest of the prophets, that the Lord has taught nothing that is obscure, or ambiguous, or false. We reply also with Peter, that "the prophetic word is more sure, and you do well if you take heed to it, as to a lamp burning in a dark place, till the day dawn, and the morning-star arise in our hearts." (2 Pet. i. 19.) If these things were said concerning the Law and the prophets, what shall we say of the Gospel, by which the clearest light has been revealed to us? Shall we not say with Paul, "If the Gospel is dark, it is dark to those who are lost, whom Satan, the prince of this world, hath blinded?" (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) Let blind and weak-sighted men therefore accuse themselves, when they cannot endure

this brightness of the word; but, whatever may be the darkness by which they shall endeavour to clothe it, let us adhere firmly and steadfastly to this heavenly light.

Besides, the Prophet appears to allude to the predictions which were uttered out of the groves and tripods of the idols.[1] They are uncertain and deceitful, but nothing of this kind can be found in God's answers; for he speaks openly, and utters nothing that is deceitful or ambiguous. But experience tells us that Scripture is somewhat dark and hard to be understood. This is indeed true, but ought to be ascribed to the dulness and slowness of our apprehension, and not to the Scripture; for blind or weak-sighted men have no right to accuse the sun, because they cannot look at him.

I have not said in vain to the seed of Jacob, Seek me. This continues to be a fixed principle, that they who shew themselves to be submissive and obedient, do not spend their labour in vain; because God faithfully performs the office of a teacher towards poor and little ones. Now, though all do not rise in the highest degree, yet the labour of those who shall sincerely seek God will never be unprofitable. By this expression, *Seek me*, Isaiah points out the principal end and use of the Law, to invite men to God; and, indeed, their true happiness lies in being united to God,[2] and the sacred bond of union is faith and sincere piety.

In this second clause he not only asserts that he has spoken clearly and without ambiguity, but declares the certainty and steadfastness of his word; as if he had said, that he does not promise largely with an intention to deceive, or amuse hungry men by words, but actually performs what he has promised. This demonstrates the ingratitude of those who, when they are called, do not answer; since God has no other design than to make us partakers of all blessings, of which we are otherwise empty and destitute.

[1] "Vitringa, Lowth, Ewald, and Umbreit suppose an allusion to the mysterious and doubtful responses of the heathen oracles. The objections of Gesenius are of no more weight than in verses 1, 2, 3, the analogy of which places makes it not improbable that such an allusion to the oracles is couched under the general terms of the verse before us."—*Alexander.*

[2] "C'est leur vraye felicité d'estre conjoints à leur Sauveur." "It is their true happiness to be united to their Saviour."

I Jehovah speaking righteousness. This is added for the sake of explanation; as if he had said that the word by which he draws his elect to himself, is not soiled by any stain of fraud, but contains the most perfect holiness. "The words of the Lord," as David says, "are clean, like silver purified in an earthen furnace, seven times refined." (Psalm xii. 6.) Thus, in the word of God we have bright righteousness, which instantly shines into our hearts, when the darkness has been removed.

20. *Assemble yourselves.* He challenges all superstitious persons, and, as it were, appoints a day that they may submit to a righteous judgment, as we have formerly seen in expounding other passages, in order to shew that they can plead nothing which shall not be speedily overturned. Now, indeed, they delight in their superstitions; but all their smoke shall be dispelled, when they come to plead their cause, and without any difficulty they shall be convicted. Let them then "assemble" in crowds, let them conspire and make every effort by fraud, and threatenings, and terrors; the truth shall at length be victorious. This confirmation was highly necessary for the Jews, because in every nation and in every place they beheld the spread of wicked errors which buried the worship of the true God. We also ought to betake ourselves to this refuge, when we see how few and how feeble we are. The Mahometans possess a large portion of the world, the Papists, with elevated crest, triumph far and wide, while we are but a handful of people,[1] and are scarcely reckoned in the number of men. But truth shall at last prevail, and shall cast down all that loftiness which now dazzles the eyes of men.

Ye rejected of the nations.[2] פְּלֵיטֵי (*pĕlītē*) is translated by

[1] "Qui ne sommes qu' une poignee de gens."

[2] "Ye (that are) escaped of the nations."—Eng. Ver. This interpretation, though set aside by our author, is approved by able commentators. "*Escaped of the nations* has been variously explained to mean the Jews who had escaped from the oppression of the Gentiles, and the Gentiles who had escaped from the dominion of idolatry. But these last would scarcely have been summoned to a contest. On the whole, it seems most natural to understand the nations who survived the judgments sent by God upon them. The Hebrew phrase is in itself ambiguous, the noun added to פְּלֵיטֵי (*pĕlītē*) sometimes denoting the whole body, out of which

some "rejected," by others "exiles," or "those who have escaped;" and the address is supposed to be made to the Jews who had returned from the captivity. But that is too forced a sense. The more generally received interpretation is, "Rejected of the nations," because פלט (*pālăt*) means "to reject." Not that he describes the meaner sort, or the refuse of men; but, on the contrary, he directs his discourse to those who were the highest in rank, and wealth, and power, and learning among the Gentiles. He calls them "rejected," because they are of no value in the sight of God, though they are highly esteemed by men; for "that which ranks high among men is detestable in the sight of God." (Luke xvi. 15.) Yet if it be thought preferable to translate it "distant," I have no objection; as if he had said, "Let them assemble from the farthest parts of the earth."

That carry the wood of their graven image. He shews how great is the madness which seizes idolaters, who worship images, which they bear on their shoulders and carry round on waggons. Or we may take נשׂאים (*nèsīīm*) as denoting "to place on a lofty and elevated spot," as it was a crafty device of Satan to erect statues on pillars and lofty places, in order to excite the admiration of men, and to lead men to pay honour and reverence by merely looking at them. But we may interpret it simply as denoting all worship that is rendered to images, so as to convict them of vanity and madness. Superstitious persons know that idols need the aid and assistance of men, instead of men needing the aid and assistance of idols, which cannot even be made to stand upright without the agency of men.[1] And this is the meaning of what next follows, to *pray to a god that cannot save;* for what can be more foolish than to address vows and prayers to wood and stone? and yet infidels run about to dead statues, for the purpose of seeking salvation from them.

a remnant has escaped, sometimes the power from which they are delivered. Compare Judges xii. 4; Ezra vi. 9; vii. 16; Obad. 11, with Jer. xlv. 28; Ezra vi. 8. The predominant usage and the context here decide in favour of the first interpretation."—*Alexander.*

[1] "Lesquelles ne pourroyent demeurer debout si les hommes n'y mettoyent la main." "Which could not stand upright, if men did not put their hand to them."

21. *Tell ye.* He again challenges all those who might have annoyed the Jews and shaken their faith by their taunts; for he always keeps this object in view, to fortify the faith of the people against all the assaults of the Gentiles. Amidst temptations so numerous and so severe, there was danger lest the Jews should sink under their terrible afflictions, if there had not been powerful arguments on the other side to induce them still to worship and trust the true God; and therefore he permits heathens to produce and bring forward everything that they can find in support of their cause.

Let them also take counsel together. These words are added, in order to inspire greater confidence; for the Prophet means, as we have already said, that they will gain nothing, though they "take counsel" among themselves and enter into a conspiracy. Yet, perhaps, he intended also to make it evident that there is nothing but groundless pretence and falsehood in all that infidels contrive for excusing their errors. Whatever then may be the gaudy ostentation with which they plume themselves on their inventions, the Prophet shews that the word of God will be abundantly strong to support the faith of believers. He challenges them to a strict examination, in order to compare with the Law and the prophets all that infidels boast of as having been foretold by their idols. I cheerfully admit what is generally believed, that the Prophet speaks of the redemption of the people; but as the overthrow of the Babylonian monarchy was likewise connected with it, I think that it is also included.

Who hath proclaimed this from the beginning? Because there is a repetition of the same statement, מִקֶּדֶם (*mĭkkĕdĕm*) and מֵאָז (*mēāz*) mean the same thing; as if he had said, "from the beginning," or, "from of old;" for this prophecy was published long before the event happened. Hence believers might with certainty conclude that God had spoken.

And a saviour. To foreknowledge he adds power, as in a former passage. Yet he likewise describes for what purposes he exerts his power, that is, for "saving" his people.

22. *Look unto me.* Hitherto he addressed the Jews alone, as if to them alone salvation belonged, but now he

extends his discourse farther. He invites the whole world to the hope of salvation, and at the same time brings a charge of ingratitude against all the nations, who, being devoted to their errors, purposely avoided, as it were, the light of life; for what could be more base than to reject deliberately their own salvation? He therefore commands all "to look to him," and to the precept adds a promise, whch gives it greater weight, and confirms it more than if he had made use of a bare command.

And ye shall be saved. Thus we have a striking proof of the calling of the Gentiles; because the Lord, after having broken down "the partition-wall" (Eph. ii. 14) which separated the Jews from the Gentiles, invites all without exception to come to him. Besides, we are here reminded also what is the true method of obtaining salvation; that is, when we "look to God," and turn to him with our whole heart. Now, we must "look to him" with the eye of faith, so as to embrace the salvation which is exhibited to all through Christ; for "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish." (John iii. 16.)

For I am God. When he exhorts *all the ends of the earth*, he at the same time shews that all men have hitherto wandered, and have not "looked to" the true God; for where infidelity exists, there cannot be a distinct looking towards God, so as to distinguish him from empty masks. In a word, he declares that the ruin of all has been occasioned by their being driven about by their wicked inventions, and thus revolting from the true God, from the knowledge of whom certain and eternal salvation flows. The Lord therefore stretches out his hand, in order to rescue all and point out the method of obtaining salvation.

This makes it evident that it was not at random that the doctrine of the Gospel was preached to all nations, but by the decree of God, by whom it had been long ago ordained. Yet, as I remarked a little before, he accuses the Gentiles of stupidity, in allowing their senses to be turned and whirled about in all directions, wherever their fancy led them. Though by nature they could not approach to God, and though they even sucked in with their milk the superstitions

by which they were blinded, yet God might have justly reproached them with wicked contempt of his grace; for ignorance always implies hypocrisy, when men choose rather to be deceived by empty flatteries than to go straight to God.

23. *I have sworn by myself.* He adds a clearer confirmation of the preceding statement; for, in consequence of this calling being unusual and marvellous, he adds an oath, as is usually done in what is new and hard to be believed. The Jews might have objected, that they alone were called by the name of the elect people; but, when he confirms it by an oath, this removes all debate. The Prophet still, indeed, aims at the same object, namely, that the glory of God shall be so visible in the restoration of the Church as to arouse the whole world to the admiration of it from the rising to the setting of the sun, or, to express it more briefly, that this demonstration of the power of God shall be so splendid and illustrious as to strike all nations with fear. Yet from these words we may justly infer what I have remarked, that the Gentiles shall be admitted to an equality with the Jews, so that God shall be the common Father of all, and shall be worshipped in every country.

Now, God "swears by himself," because he cannot have another equally competent witness of the truth; for he alone is the truth. "Men," as the Apostle says, "swear by a greater than themselves; but God, because he had no greater, hath sworn by himself." (Heb. vi. 16.) We ought to observe the reason why he "swears." It is because he intended to aid the weakness of his people, that they might not be tossed about in uncertainty. This certainly is wonderful condescension, that, in order to remedy the fault of our distrust, he does not scruple to bring forward his own name as holding the place of a pledge; and the more base and disgraceful must be our unbelief, if even an oath does not satisfy us. Besides, since God claims for himself all confirmation of the truth, we ought to be exceedingly careful, when we appeal to him by an oath, not to mingle any other names either of saints or of any creature, but, by using his name with all becoming reverence, to preserve the honour due to him entire and unabated.

The word hath gone out of my mouth in righteousness. He means that all that he has commanded to be published by his Prophet is firm and lasting, as if he had said that this commandment did not proceed "out of his mouth" rashly or unadvisedly. And in this sense the word *righteousness* is often used in Scripture, that is, for a word that is not deceitful, which shall clearly appear to be perfectly true; and thus he says that the decree cannot be revoked.

And shall not return. This is another mode of expression conveying the same idea. It means that the word of God shall continue to make progress, till the actual result shall make manifest that it has proceeded from a just and true and almighty God. A person is said to *return*, when some obstacle hinders him from proceeding farther; but, because nothing can prevent God from executing what he has decreed, the Prophet justly infers that nothing can interrupt or retard the course of this word. The particle כִּי, (*ki*,) *that*, must be viewed as introducing an explanatory clause; as much as to say, "This is the *word*,"

That to me every knee shall bow. By this mode of expression he means that all the Gentiles shall be suppliants to God, because the astonishing deliverance of the Church shall strike terror upon all. Yet hence also it follows, that his worship shall be spread among all nations; for we cannot truly "bend the knee" before God till he hath been made known to us. To an unknown God, indeed, men may render some kind of worship; but it is false and unprofitable. But here he speaks of a true profession, which proceeds from a knowledge of God deeply seated in our hearts; for, where there is no faith, there can be no worship of God, and faith is not directed to a thing unknown or uncertain. Accordingly, he has made use of the sign to express the thing itself, as is frequently done.

Hence it ought to be observed, that God demands also external worship; for the Prophet does not separate an external profession of religion from the inward feelings of the heart. In vain, therefore, do fanatics boast that in some manner they worship God and do homage to him, while they bow down before idols. In vain, I say, do they

pretend that their heart is upright towards God; for the worship of the heart cannot be separated from an external profession. In like manner the soul cannot be dedicated and consecrated to God, while the body is consecrated to the devil; for both ought to be consecrated to God, and thus the worship of the heart ought also to be accompanied by an external profession. "With the heart we believe to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." (Rom. x. 10.) Hence also the Lord, approving of the piety and uprightness of his people, says, "that they have not bowed a knee before Baal." (1 Kings xix. 18; Rom. xi. 4.)

Paul applies this passage of Isaiah to the last judgment, when he says (Rom. xiv. 10, 11) that "we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ;" although the subject here treated of is, the redemption of the people, the publication of the gospel, and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. But he takes for granted (what all ought to know) that those statements which relate to the kingdom of Christ must not be limited to any part of it, but extend to the whole of its course, till it arrive at full perfection. The knee is bent to Christ, when his doctrine is obeyed, and when the preaching of the gospel is accepted. But many still oppose and boldly despise him; Satan contrives many schemes and incessantly carries on war with him; and therefore we are at a great distance from the full accomplishment of this prophecy. Then shall every knee be truly bent to Christ, when he shall triumph over vanquished and utterly ruined adversaries, and shall render visible to all men his majesty, which Satan and wicked men now oppose. Thus Paul teaches that, when Christ shall ascend his judgment-seat to judge the world, then shall be fully accomplished that which began to be done at the commencement of the gospel, and which we still see done from day to day.

Every tongue shall swear. By a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, the word *swear* is put for worship, reverence, or subjection. "Swearing" is one department of the honour which is due to God; for by it we confess and acknowledge that he is the Author and Father

and lawful defender of the truth, and that "all things are naked and open to him." (Heb. iv. 13.) Whenever therefore this honour is bestowed on idols, the majesty of God is dishonoured by abominable sacrilege; and consequently they who worship him purely swear exclusively by his name. But on this subject we have spoken[1] in the exposition of another passage. (Isaiah xix. 18.)

24. *Surely in Jehovah.* He shews what is the nature of true faith and of the true worship of God; that is, when we not only acknowledge, or perceive by the understanding, that there is a God, but likewise feel what he wishes to be towards us. Whoever shall be satisfied with a bare knowledge departs very widely from faith, which must invite us to God in such a manner that we shall feel him to be in us. In like manner Paul wishes that "Christ should dwell in the hearts of believers through faith." (Eph. iii. 17.) He who imagines that God sits unemployed in heaven either will not humble himself sincerely before him, or will not make an open and sincere profession.

Righteousness and strength. As these are the two principal parts of our salvation, when believers acknowledge that they receive both of them from God, they ascribe to him the undivided praise of a happy life, and testify that by nature they do not possess that which they acknowledge that they owe to his grace. Thus they own that in themselves they have nothing either of "righteousness" or of "strength," but seek them in God alone, that he may not be defrauded of his right.

To him shall he come. Here commentators differ; but, for my own part, I take a simple view of this passage as relating to believers who submit themselves to God, so as to enable us to perceive the nature of the contrast between them and rebels, who do not cease obstinately to resist God. I explain it thus: "They who shall confess that their righteousness is placed in God will approach to him." He means that we obtain access to God through faith, so that they who perceive that their righteousness is placed in him, feel that he is present; and indeed no man, if he be not reconciled

[1] See Commentary on Isaiah, vol. ii. p. 70.

to God, will ever approach to him willingly, but, on the contrary, all who dread his majesty will fly to the greatest possible distance from him. Thus the Prophet applauds the very delightful result of grace, because it will unite to God those men who were formerly driven away from him by their wickedness; and to this corresponds what is said by the Psalmist, "Thou art the God that heareth prayer; to thee shall all flesh come." (Psalm lxv. 2.)

But all who defy him shall be ashamed. After having testified that God wishes to gather strangers from their dispersion, that he may bring them into a state of intimate friendship with himself, he threatens vengeance against despisers, who, being without God, and despising God, give the reins to their wicked passions, and wallow in the enjoyments of the world. As it is only by faith that we obey God, so it is by unbelief alone that Isaiah declares his anger to be provoked; while he distinguishes all unbelievers by this mark, that they are disobedient to God, and even challenge him to a contest. Although they now use the language of triumph, the Prophet declares that they shall be clothed with shame and disgrace.

25. *In Jehovah shall be justified.* He now makes a brief reply to an objection which might be urged, that it appeared absurd to say, that the Lord called the Gentiles, who had always been alienated from him. "Is it in vain that the Lord hath chosen the seed of Abraham? Is his promise void, which he so frequently repeated?" (Gen. xv. 5, and xvii. 7.) In order to remove this doubt, he declares that the Lord will nevertheless stand by his promises; that, though he choose the Gentiles, yet the covenant which he made with the fathers shall not fall to the ground, because the elect people shall enjoy the privileges of their rank. Nor does he in this passage, as in many others, speak of the rejection of that nation; but the Prophet simply shews that the grace of God, which shall be diffused throughout the whole world, shall flow from that fountain.

As to the greater number having been rejected by God, still this did not set aside God's covenant; because the remnant of adoption were always the true and lawful Israel;

and although they were few in number, yet they were the first-born in the Church. Besides, all those among the Gentiles who had been ingrafted into that body began also, as we have formerly seen, to be accounted children of Abraham. "One shall say, I belong to Jacob; another shall subscribe with his hand, I am a descendant of Israel." (Isaiah xliv. 5.) And on this ground we are now reckoned the genuine Israel of God, though we are not the descendants of Israel. The Prophet therefore added this, both that the Jews might not think that the Lord's covenant had failed, and that they might not boast of their birth and despise the Gentiles.

All the seed of Israel. He extends this seed farther, that they may not suppose that it ought to be limited to the family of Abraham; for the Lord gathers his people without distinction from among Jews and Gentiles, and here he speaks universally of the whole human race.

Shall be justified and shall glory. It ought to be observed that the Prophet says that we "are justified and glory in the Lord," for in none else ought we to seek "righteousness" or "glory." He has joined to it "glory," which depends on "righteousness," and is added to it. Hence also Paul says, "Where is thy glorying? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith." (Rom. iii. 27.) And, again, "If Abraham was justified by works, he hath glory, but not before God." (Rom. iv. 2.) It follows, therefore, that they alone deservedly glory who seek their righteousness in God, and acknowledge that in themselves they have no ground for glorying.

CHAPTER XLVI.

1. Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages *were* heavy loaden; *they are* a burden to the weary *beast.*

2. They stoop; they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.

1. Incurvatus est *(vel, prostratus est)* Bel; depressus est Nebo. Simulachra eorum bestiæ et jumento erunt, gestantia vos a vobis onerata, pondus ad lassitudinem.

2. Incurvata sunt, depressa sunt pariter, (et) non potuerunt se subtrahere oneri; et anima eorum in captivitatem abiit.

3. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne *by me* from the belly, *which are* carried from the womb:

3. Audite me, domus Iacob, omnes reliquiæ domus Israel, qui gestamini ab utero, qui portamini a vulva.

4. And *even* to *your* old age I *am* he; and *even* to hoar hairs will I carry *you:* I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver *you.*

4. Et usque ad senium ego idem, et usque ad caniciem ego portabo. Ego feci, et ego feram, ego portabo et servabo.

5. To whom will ye liken me, and make *me* equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

5. Cui similem me facitis, et æquatis, et comparatis me, ut similis sim?

6. They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, *and* hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship.

6. Promentes aurum ex sacculis, argentum in statera ponderantes, conducent aurifabrum, ut ex eo faciant Deum, cui se incurvent, et quem adorent.

7. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, *one* shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.

7. Portabunt super humerum, deferent, ponent in loco suo; illic stabit, loco suo non movebitur. Adhæc, si quis clamet ad eum, non respondebit, neque ex tribulatione ejus liberabit eum.

8. Remember this, and shew yourselves men; bring *it* again to mind, O ye transgressors.

8. Recordamini hoc, et erubescite (*vel, roboramini;*) redite, prævaricatores ad cor.

9. Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me;

9. Recordamini priora a seculo; quia ego Deus, et nullus præterea Deus, et nihil mihi simile.

10. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

10. Nuntians ab initio novissimum, et a vetustate quæ nondum facta erant; dicens, Consilium meum stabit, et quicquid voluero faciam.

11. Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it,* I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it,* I will also do it.

11. Vocans ab Oriente avem (*vel, cogitationem,*) e terra longinqua virum consilii mei. Loquutus sum, ideo adducam hoc; cogitavi, idem faciam.

12. Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that *are* far from righteousness:

12. Audite me præfracti corde, qui procul estis a justitia.

13. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

13. Appropinquare faciam justitiam meam, nec elongabitur, et salus mea non morabitur. Et ponam in Sion salutem, et in Ierusalem gloriam meam.

1. *Bel hath bowed down.* Isaiah continues the same subject; for we need not trouble ourselves about the division

of chapters, which have not always been accurately divided; but we ought to examine the statements themselves, which agree with each other in the manner which I have pointed out. Yet if any prefer to view this as the commencement of a new discourse, because immediately afterwards he prophesies concerning the destruction of Babylon, I shall not greatly quarrel with him.

Nebo is cast down. "Bel" and "Nebo" were idols which were worshipped by the Babylonians, and probably were their chief patrons; as idolaters always have some particular gods, under whose protection, above all others, they consider themselves to be placed. It may be conjectured that this "Nebo" was a sort of inferior god that was added to the chief god "Bel," as Mercury was to Jupiter. Under their names he includes also the rest of the idols, and declares that all the superstitions and false worship of the Gentiles shall be overthrown, when God shall lay low and triumph over their worshippers; because it shall then be manifest that he is the righteous avenger of his Church.

Their idols shall be on the beasts. The Babylonians having haughtily boasted of the protection of false gods, the Prophet rebukes that vain confidence, because the God of Israel will not only bring utter ruin on that wicked nation, but also will cast down and treat disdainfully their gods. The reason why he says that they shall be burdens of "beasts" is, that they shall be laid on waggons and removed from one place to another, and shall even be huddled together without any respect, as the waggoners think proper. This is what is meant by "being cast down," for the robbers shall collect into a large heap those gods which formerly occupied an elevated station.

There can be no doubt, indeed, that this was fulfilled when the Persians and Medes took Babylon by storm; for when the monarchy was removed, these idols were taken away as a part of the booty. But Isaiah, though he predicted this, looked farther, that is, to the coming of Christ, who was to overturn and destroy all false worship; for, when his kingdom has been established, all idols immediately fall to the ground, and it is impossible that false religion and superstiti-

tion can exist along with the knowledge of him. By his brightness he dispels all darkness, so as to leave no room for false gods or superstitions; for, as Paul says, "What hath Christ to do with Belial? What hath light to do with darkness?" (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.)

At the same time it ought to be observed, that the Prophet had his eye on the time when the Jews were held in captivity; for they saw the Babylonians offer incense to idols, and ascribe to them supreme power, as if the government of affairs depended on them; while the God of the Jews was treated with scorn, as if he could not defend his people, or as if he cared nothing about them. For this reason he shews that there will be so great a revolution, that the gods of the Babylonians, which were elevated so high, shall be laid low, and God, who appeared to lie low, shall rise up and avenge his people.

2. *They could not withdraw themselves from the burden.* He ridicules the vanity of such gods as these, which have neither strength nor motion, and cannot defend or support themselves, and, in a word, who need the aid of beasts of burden to carry them. There is, therefore, an implied contrast between idols and the true God, who has no need of anything whatever. I interpret these words as applied to beasts, but the Prophet heightens the disgrace by saying that they were a heavy burden to the beasts themselves which would willingly have cast them off, and consequently that the false gods, besides being of no use to their worshippers, also wearied out the beasts.

And their soul hath gone into captivity. This is a Hebrew mode of expression, by which he ridicules those gods which have neither "soul" nor understanding. He speaks ironically, therefore, against useless and dumb idols, when he says that they shall be carried into captivity along with their soul. But we must see if these things cannot be retorted on the true God, whose ark, by which he gave testimony of his presence, was taken by the Philistines; for in this way it appeared as if the Lord were a captive. (1 Sam. iv. 11.) This objection may be easily answered; for, although the Lord intended that the ark should be a testimony of his

presence, yet he forbade the Jews to fix their whole and exclusive attention upon it, but commanded them to raise their eyes to heaven, and there to seek and adore God. He wished to be always worshipped in a spiritual manner, (John iv. 24,) and the ark was not adored instead of God, but was a symbol, by which the people were led upwards, as by the hand, to God. The Gentiles, on the other hand, fixed their attention on their idols, and attributed to them divine power.

It might even have been said that the Philistines were at length punished for their wickedness, and acknowledged that they had to deal with the true God. (1 Sam. v. 6.) But that would not have been a sufficient answer, because the Lord sometimes permitted his ark to be treated with derision, as is evident from other passages of the history. The true solution therefore is, that the Lord, though he holds intercourse with us by symbols and sacraments, yet wishes to be sought in heaven. To this must be added, that he had openly declared, by memorable predictions, that he was not dragged as a captive by conquerors, but that of his own accord he exposed his sanctuary to the sport of enemies, in order to punish the sins of his people. Nor could the Jews, when the Temple had been thrown down and burnt, and when the holy vessels were carried to Babylon, doubt that the same God whom they had worshipped was the author of this punishment, since he had so frequently threatened by his prophets what then happened.

3. *Hear me.* Here the Prophet beautifully points out the vast difference between the true God and idols. Having formerly said that the Babylonian gods must be drawn on waggons and carts, because they consist of dead matter, he now ascribes a widely different office to the God of Israel, namely, that he "carries" his people, like a mother, who carries the child in her womb, and afterwards carries it in her bosom. He addresses the Jews, that they may return an answer from their experience; for this ought to have powerfully affected them, when they actually felt that he bore them and their burdens. He, therefore, makes use of a highly appropriate contrast, and concludes from the preceding statements: "Acknowledge that I am the true God,

and that I differ widely from idols, which are useless and dead weights; for you have known and experienced my power by constant benefits, which I have not ceased to confer upon you from the womb." God is not only powerful in himself, but diffuses his power through all the creatures; so that we feel his strength and energy.

Who are carried from the womb. This is a very expressive metaphor, by which God compares himself to a mother who carries a child in her womb. He speaks of the past time, when he began to give them testimonies of his grace. Yet the words might be taken as meaning simply that God kindly nourished that people, like an infant taken from its mother's womb, and carried it in his bosom, as the Psalmist says, "I was cast upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly." (Ps. xxii. 10.) But as God did not only begin to act as the father and nurse of his people from the time when they were born, but also "begat them" (James i. 18) spiritually, I do not object to extending the words so far as to mean, that they were brought, as it were, out of the bowels of God into a new life and the hope of an eternal inheritance.

If it be objected, that God is everywhere called "a Father," (Jer. xxxi. 9; Mal. i. 6,) and that this title is more appropriate to him, I reply, that no figures of speech can describe God's extraordinary affection towards us; for it is infinite and various; so that, if all that can be said or imagined about love were brought together into one, yet it would be surpassed by the greatness of the love of God. By no metaphor, therefore, can his incomparable goodness be described. If you understand it simply to mean that God, from the time that he begat them, gently carried and nourished them in his bosom, this will agree admirably with what we find in the Song of Moses, "He bore them, and carried them, as an eagle carrieth her young on her wings." (Deut. xxxii. 11.) In a word, the intention of the Prophet is to shew, that the Jews, if they do not choose to forget their descent, cannot arrive at any other conclusion than that they were not begotten in vain, and that God, who has manifested himself to be both their Father and their Mother, will always assist

them ; and likewise, that they have known his power by uninterrupted experience, so that they ought not to pay homage to idols.

All the remnant of the house of Israel. By calling them a "remnant" he means, as we formerly remarked, that the greater part had been alienated from the Church by their revolt, so that the hope of deliverance belonged only to a very small number. On this account he demands from them a hearing ; for unbelievers, not less than heathen nations, were utterly deaf to his voice. Now, although the people were so far from being in their unbroken strength, that the dispersion of them had left but a small number behind, yet God bids them consider how wonderfully they have been hitherto preserved, that they may not doubt that he will henceforth act towards them, as he has hitherto acted, the part of both father and mother. And when he demands that they shall listen to him, he shews that the true and indeed the only remedy for our distresses and calamities is, to hang on his mouth, and to be attentive to the promises of grace ; for then shall we have sufficient courage to bear every affliction ; but if not, the way is opened for despair, and we ought not to expect anything else than destruction.

4. *And even to old age.* Here I explain the copulative ו (*vau*) to mean *therefore ;* and the reasoning ought to be carefully observed, for he argues thus, "I have begotten and brought you forth ;" and again, "Even when you were little children, I carried you in my arms, and *therefore* I will be the guardian of your life till the end." Thus also David reasons, "Thou art he who brought me out of the womb ; I trusted in thee while I hung on my mother's breasts ; I was cast upon thee from my birth ; thou art my God from my mother's womb." (Ps. xxii. 10.) He therefore promises that he will always be a Father to the Jews ; and hence we see that we ought to cherish assured confidence of salvation from the time that the Lord hath once begun it in us, for he wishes to continue his work till the end. "The Lord," says David, "will complete what he hath begun ;" and again, "O Lord, thy loving-kindness is eternal, and thou wilt not forsake the works of thy hands." (Ps. cxxxviii. 8.)

I am the same. The Hebrew word הוּא (*hu*) is, in my opinion, very emphatic, though some interpreters render it simply by the demonstrative pronoun *He;*[1] but it means that God is always "the same" and like himself, not only in his essence, but with respect to us, so that we ourselves shall feel that he is the same. When he says, "Even to old age,"[2] it might be thought absurd; for we ought to become full-grown men after having been carried by God from infancy. But if any one shall examine it properly, it will be found that we never make so great progress as not to need to be upheld by the strength of God, for otherwise the most perfect man would stumble every moment; as David also testifies, "Forsake me not in the time of old age, withdraw not from me when my strength faileth." (Ps. lxxi. 9.)

I have made and will carry. He again argues in the same manner. God does not regard what we deserve, but continues his grace toward us; and therefore we ought to draw confidence from it, "Thou didst create us, not only that we might be human beings, but that we might be thy children; and therefore thou wilt continue till the end to exercise continually toward us the care of a father and of a mother."

5. *To whom will ye liken and compare me?* Here the Prophet introduces the Lord as remonstrating with the Jews, because they distrusted and doubted his power, and, in a word, because they put him on a level with idols, and even placed idols above him. When they saw the Babylonians enjoy prosperity, they thought that their hope was gone, and that the remembrance of the covenant had faded away, and hardly believed that God was in heaven or took any concern about them. On this account the Lord complains that they ascribe some power to idols, and that thus they cast his power into the shade. This subject was formerly discussed under the forty-second, forty-third, and following chapters; and

[1] "I (am) he." (Eng. Ver.) This is the literal rendering.—*Ed.*

[2] "'When thou shalt be old, and thy strength shall fail, (for thou hast no merits or works of righteousness,) I am the same as to my mercy and kindness, to keep, and carry, and bear, and deliver;' for the Prophet had said of the idol that it is carried about, and cannot rid itself of its own burden, and therefore God says here, 'I am he who carry others and bear my own burden.'"—*Jarchi.*

therefore it is unnecessary to repeat observations n each word.

In order that they may not estimate the power God by the present condition of things, he bids them raise their minds higher. In like manner, when we see the Papists enjoy prosperity, if we should entertain doubts whether or not they possessed the true religion, we would need to be dissuaded by the same exhortation; for this would be to compare God with idols. And we ought carefully to observe this circumstance, the forgetfulness or disregard of which has led many commentators absurdly to weaken this statement, by supposing that the Prophet merely attacks superstitious persons who ascribe some divine power to wood or stone, because this degrades the glory of God by comparing him to dead things. But I have no doubt that he reproves that sinful and wicked conclusion by which the people, when they were weighed down by adversity, imagined that God was favourable to the Babylonians; for, if he had been favourable to them, it would follow that he approves of idolatry, and thus his honour would have been conveyed to dumb creatures. We may likewise draw from it a general doctrine, that God is robbed of his glory, when he is compared to dumb and senseless things, as Paul also applies the passage appropriately. (Acts xvii. 29.)

6. *Lavishing gold out of bags.* The Prophet had formerly said this, and he now repeats it, in order to fix this doctrine more and more deeply on the hearts of men; for superstition has struck its roots so deeply in their hearts, that it cannot be torn out, unless the Lord entirely change our nature. Whatever we have heard about this madness quickly passes out of our minds; for we always carry about some seed of superstition, and there is nothing to which we are more prone than to fall into it. He says, therefore, that one person supplies the materials for manufacturing idols, and another gives them a shape; and that in this way it may be said that there are two fathers of such gods, that is, the rich man who lavishes out the gold or silver, and the workman who adds the shape and makes the idol. Thus he makes an open exposure of the madness of those who seek a deity in their

purses and in the hand of their workmen; for what means so sudden a change, that they bow down before the metal, as soon as it has assumed a different shape, and a shape, too, which has been regulated by their own will or caprice? for it is exactly such a god as they have been pleased to manufacture at their own expense.

They even adore. The particle אַף, (*ăph,*) *even*, heightens the description of this madness; for there might perhaps be some room for repentance, if one who had been overtaken by a sudden mistake adored some false god; but these men obstinately persevere in their error. This word therefore draws attention more strongly to that obstinacy, and shews that they are altogether blinded. Excessively foolish, as I have said, is this stupidity, when men adore a god which they have made with their own hands.

7. *They shall carry them on the shoulder.* The picture is still more heightened by the description contained in this verse; for, since the idols have no feeling of any kind, they who fly to them to ask assistance must be not only very stupid but very obstinate.

8. *Remember this.* This verse may be explained in two ways, either that the Lord addresses the Jews, or that he addresses the Gentiles. Men who otherwise are not well instructed in the Law are led into mistakes, because they extinguish that knowledge which God kindles in their hearts; for there is no person who has not some seed of religion implanted in him by nature, but men choke it by their unbelief, or corrupt and debase it by their inventions. On this account we might extend it to the whole human race. But I am more disposed to adopt a different opinion, which is also demanded by the context; for the Prophet will soon afterwards add what does not apply to any but the Jews, whom he calls *transgressors*, because, having been vanquished by a slight temptation, they revolted from the true God, as if captivity ought to have obliterated from their hearts all the benefits which he had bestowed on them. Since, therefore, they had shaken off the true religion, he sharply rebukes their ingratitude in having been so easily led away to sinful inventions.

Return to the heart.[1] By giving them this injunction he means that they are not of sound understanding. Others render it, "Recall." This is feeble and inappropriate, and, a little before, he had bid them remember, and will immediately repeat the same thing. Now, therefore, he rather bids them "return to the heart," because forgetfulness of God's benefits was a sort of madness.

Blush. Others render it, "Act a manly part," and derive the word from אִישׁ, (*īsh.*) Others derive it from אָשִׁישׁ, (*āshīsh,*) which means "a foundation;" as if he had said, "Take courage, do not despair of my assistance." But I rather agree with Jerome, who derives it from אֵשׁ, (*ēsh ;*) for it is more appropriate, when their disgrace has been exposed, to "be ashamed" than to assume manly courage; though I leave it to every person to form his own judgment. He therefore means that they *blush* for their madness, ingratitude, and wickedness, so as to return to God.[2]

9. *Remember the former things.* This is an explanation of the preceding statement; for he expresses more fully what he formerly meant, that is, that God hath testified of himself by sufficiently numerous proofs, and hath shewed what is his nature and greatness; and that not merely for two or three days, or for a few years, but *at all times;* for he had continued his benefits, and had incessantly bestowed his grace upon them. Hence he infers that the manifestations of his divinity, being so clear, ought to prevent them from giving their hearts to another.

That I am God. In this passage the particle כִּי (*kī*) does not signify *for*, but *that*, and introduces a clause which explains what goes before. Besides, as we have formerly explained, God wishes not only that he may be acknowledged, but that he alone may be acknowledged; and therefore he

[1] "Bring (it) again to mind."—Eng. Ver.

[2] "The verb הִתְאַשְּׁשׁוּ (*hĭthshĕshū*) is a ἅπαξ λεγόμενον, and admits of several different explanations. Joseph Kimchi derived it from אֵשׁ, (*ēsh,*) *fire*, and explained it to mean, 'Be inflamed or reddened,' that is, 'blush.' So the Vulgate, confundamini (be confounded.) The Targum and Jarchi understand it to mean 'Fortify or strengthen yourselves,' and connect it with אֲשִׁישִׁים, (*ăshīshīm,*) foundations. (Isa. xvi. 7.) Bochart derives it from אִישׁ, (*īsh,*) *a man*, and identifies it with the ἀνδρίζεσθε of 1 Cor. xvi. 13."—*Alexander.*

wishes to be separated from all the gods which men have made for themselves, that we may fix our whole attention on him; because, if he admitted any companion, his throne would fall or shake; for either there is one God or there is none at all.

10. *Declaring from the beginning.* He now explains more fully in what manner he wishes the Jews to remember the past time, namely, that they were taught by constant predictions, as far as was necessary for their advantage. But from this preface he immediately makes a transition to the hope of deliverance.

My counsel shall stand. We ought not to wonder that he repeats this so frequently, because it is very hard to persuade men of the truth of it. The people were not only slow to believe, but even obstinate; and therefore he reminds them that they had learned long ago, and not on one occasion only, how safe it is to place their confidence in God. Nor is it only his foreknowledge that is here extolled by him, but he says that he has testified by his prophets what he had decreed. Even the prophecies would have no certainty or solidity, if the same God who declares that this or that thing shall happen had not the events themselves in his power. At the same time, he states that he speaks according to truth and brings forward his decrees in all the prophecies, that the Jews may not hesitate to place a firm reliance, as soon as the prophets have spoken. But as I have already explained these subjects more largely, I now give nothing more than a brief view of them.

11. *Calling a bird* or *a thought from the east.* After having spoken of God's foreknowledge and power, the Prophet applies to his own purpose the general statement which he had made. He intended to comfort the Jews, and to shew that they were not led into captivity in such a manner as to leave no hope of deliverance; and therefore he adds a specific instance, and promises that Cyrus shall come, though it appeared to be incredible.

The word עֵיט, (*ăīt,*) which I have translated *thought,* is translated by the greater part of interpreters *a bird;* and this is the true signification of the word. But as we may

learn from Daniel ii. 14, that it sometimes denotes *counsel*, (for the insertion of a letter in the noun עיט (*ăīt*) is customary among the Chaldee writers,) I choose rather to follow this interpretation, which is approved by some Hebrew writers. Yet it is possible that he alludes to *a bird*,[1] as if he had said that his purpose would be sudden; and I do not deny that he alludes to the swiftness of the approach of Cyrus.

The man of my counsel. When he again calls Cyrus "the man of his counsel," this is a repetition very frequent among Hebrew writers; and hence also it is evident that, in the former clause, the noun עיט (*ăīt*) is put for "thought" or "decree." Now, he calls him "the man of counsel," because he executes the Lord's decree.

Yet if it be thought preferable to translate it *bird*, I do not debate about it. The metaphor is beautiful; for the approach of Cyrus was so sudden and unexpected, that he seemed to fly like "a bird." He suddenly invaded Babylon and took it by storm, even when the Babylonians imagined that every entrance was closed against him. It may also be said, if this interpretation of the word be approved, that Isaiah alludes to auguries, to which the Babylonians were greatly addicted. Accustomed to practise judicial astrology, they observed the flight and chattering of birds, and looked upon this as a certain knowledge of future events; but the Lord threatens that he will send "a bird" which they had not

[1] "By a bird of prey is here meant the Eagle; for the Greek word ἀετός is derived from עיט, (*ăīt.*) There can be no doubt that he means Cyrus, who, in a former passage, (Isaiah xli. 25,) is said to have been called by Jehovah 'from the East,' that is, from Persia, which lay to the east of Judea. In other passages also, (as in Jer. xlix. 22; Ezek. xvii. 3,) kings and princes are compared to eagles, because, in the opinion of the ancients, the eagle is the king of birds. Thus also Cyrus is represented under the image of a 'bird of prey,' chiefly on account of the astonishing swiftness with which he rode in his expeditions from Persia into very distant countries, and on account of the violence with which he flew upon his enemies and seized them as his prey. There may also be an allusion to the circumstance, that Cyrus ordered a golden eagle, with outstretched wings, laid on a long spear, to be carried before him as his military standard; for so Xenophon describes it. Ἦν δὲ αὐτῷ σημεῖον ἀετὸς χρυσοῦς ἐπὶ δόρατος μακροῦ ἀνατεταμένος, καὶ νῦν δὲ τοῦτο ἔτι σημεῖον τῷ Περσῶν βασιλεῖ διαμένει. 'And his standard was a golden eagle stretched on a long spear, and even now this continues to be the standard of the king of Persia.' (Xen. Cyrop. vii.)"—*Rosenmüller.*

foreseen. But I prefer the former exposition, namely, that he alludes to the swiftness of Cyrus, and declares that no roads shall be shut against him, and that no fortresses shall hinder him from entering immediately into Babylon.

When he says *from the east*, this not only relates to the certainty of the promise, but is intended to inform us that no distance or length of time can retard the work of God; and accordingly, in the second clause, it is added by way of explanation, *from a distant country*. Let us learn from this what is the purpose to which we ought to apply all that we read in Scripture concerning the foreknowledge and power of God; for those statements are not made in order to keep us in suspense, but that we may apply them to our own use. Now, he makes an implied contrast between the counsel of God and our thoughts; for he delivers his people in such a manner that the reason of the deliverance cannot be comprehended by men. Thus, although that which God promises appears to be incredible, yet he says that he will easily open up a way, that we may not measure by our capacity his unsearchable counsels.

I have thought. Others render it *I have formed;* but in this passage it appears to be more appropriate to view יצר (*yātzăr*) as signifying "to think." He confirms what he formerly said, that this hath been determined by him, and therefore shall be steadfast and unalterable.

I have spoken, and will accomplish. These words mean, that he has predicted nothing in vain, and that this prediction, which he has commanded to be published, ought to be regarded as fulfilled. To establish our faith in himself was the object of the one clause, and in the other he connects his thoughts with the preached word. This ought to be carefully observed; for we are distracted by a variety of thoughts, and we doubt if God has spoken sincerely, and suspect that he is like us, that is, that he is a hypocrite or dissembler. But he declares that nothing proceeds from him but what he formerly determined in his counsel;[1] so that the preaching of the word is nothing else than a sure testimony of his hidden counsel, which he commands to

[1] "En son conseil."

be revealed to us. As soon therefore as the Lord hath spoken any word, we ought to be certain of its accomplishment.

12. *Hear me.* He again rebukes the Israelites, because they could not place confidence in God, or receive any consolation in adversity. That rebuke is indeed sharp and severe, but was well deserved by those whose hearts were not soothed by any promise, or by any invitation, however gracious, which God addressed to them.

We ought to observe the two epithets which he employs here, *Hardened in heart* and *Far from righteousness.* By these expressions he means that poor distressed persons shut the door against God's assistance on account of their obstinacy; because by murmuring or fretting they shake off the fear of God, and thus throw themselves into despair, so that they openly rage against God. He addresses the Jews, who, though they were almost overwhelmed, yet were swelled with pride and insolence, and, having thrown off the fear of God, rose to more and more outrageous madness; as frequently happens to many persons in the present day, whom distresses and afflictions render more rebellious. Accordingly, they refused to receive any medicine, any remedy for their distresses. If any one prefer to consider the word *righteousness* to be put for "the assistance of God," as in the following verse, let him enjoy his opinion, which indeed is not inappropriate; because obstinate men, who refuse to believe the promises of God, drive God away from them, and reject his grace; for they do not suffer God to confer benefits upon them, though he offered to them his assistance.

13. *I will bring near my righteousness.* If that interpretation which I mentioned a little before be preferred, that those persons are called "far from righteousness" who are incapable of receiving the grace of God, the meaning will remain unaltered; but if we hold that the Jews were "far from righteousness," because, like desperate men, they were wholly abandoned to crimes, there will be a beautiful contrast between the righteousness of men and the righteousness of God. Although therefore the Jews revolted and were estranged from all practice of godliness, yet God assures

them that "his righteousness is near;" as if he had said that unbelief is indeed a very great obstacle, but yet that it is such an obstacle as cannot hinder God from at length manifesting the power of his truth. "For the unbelief of men," as Paul says, "cannot make void the truth of God; and, though men are liars, God will always be true." (Rom. iii. 3, 4.) And indeed, if he did not exceed the malice of men by his goodness, we should all perish without exception, for who is there that receives God, and makes use of his grace as he ought?

Accordingly, the only reason why he does not continue to bestow benefits upon us is, that we are estranged from "his righteousness;" and yet, though we are reluctant and make resistance, he approaches to us in order to display "his righteousness," though we do not deserve it. Now, he does this in such a manner that unbelievers obtain no advantage at all from it; for the Prophet did not include wicked apostates, as if they should be partakers of the salvation which he promises, but he only says that God has at hand a method by which "his righteousness" shall be made manifest. But here we must consider what was the condition of the people to whom those things were spoken; for everything had been corrupted by unbelief, and there were very few who relied on the promises of God; and they who belonged to the number of the elect sometimes shewed that they were obstinate, so that they appeared to be infected by the same plague of impiety as the others. He therefore rebukes the whole nation, both to convict the reprobate and, at the same time, to chastise the elect and bring them back into the right path; but especially, as I have said, he attacks unbelievers, who professedly, as it were, rejected all hope of grace.

And my salvation shall not tarry. This makes still more plain what he meant by the word "righteousness," that is, the assistance which the Lord promised to his people. Consequently, he means the same thing by the word "salvation" and the word "righteousness;" for the most remarkable instance of the "righteousness" of God is, when he preserves, guards, and delivers his people. It is not superfluous to say that it is not "retarded" or "delayed;" for he describes the

greatness of his mercy by saying, that the Lord opens up a course for his justice, notwithstanding the reluctance and opposition of the people.

And I will place. The copulative ו (*vau*) is here used in order to express the cause, "*For* I will place." This is an additional confirmation of the preceding statement, that, since the Lord has once determined to save Jerusalem, she cannot be deprived of that benefit.

And my glory in Jerusalem. He connects his "glory" with the "salvation" of believers, as Paul also uses the word "glory" to denote "mercy." (Eph. i. 6, and iii. 16.) The glory of God is most illustriously displayed, when he rescues his people from destruction and restores them to liberty; for he wished that an indissoluble bond should connect the salvation of the Church with his righteousness.

CHAPTER XLVII.

1. Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground: *there is* no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.

2. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers.

3. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet *thee as* a man.

4. *As for* our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts *is* his name, the Holy One of Israel.

5. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called The lady of kingdoms.

6. I was wroth with my people; I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

7. And thou saidst, I shall be a

1. Descende, et sede in pulvere, virgo filia Babel. Sede super terram; non est solium filiæ Chaldæorum; quoniam non fiet amplius ut te vocent teneram et delicatam.

2. Tolle molas, et mole farinam, dissolve cincinnos tuos, denuda pedes, discooperi crura, ut transeas flumina.

3. Retegetur turpitudo tua, et videbitur probrum tuum; ultionem sumam, et non occurram homini (*vel, homo.*)

4. Redemptor noster, Iehova exercituum nomen ejus, sanctus Israelis.

5. Sede quieta, ingredere in tenebras, filia Chaldæorum; quoniam non fiet amplius ut te vocent dominam regnorum.

6. Iratus fui in populum meum, profanavi hæreditatem meam, et tradidi eos in manum tuam; non præstitisti illis misericordias; super senem aggravasti jugum tuum valde.

7. Et dixisti, Ero in æternum do-

lady for ever: *so* that thou didst not lay these *things* to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.

8. Therefore hear now this, thou *that art* given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly; that sayest in thine heart, I *am*, and none else besides me; I shall not sit *as* a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:

9. But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, *and* for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

10. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I *am*, and none else besides me.

11. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, *which* thou shalt not know.

12. Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

13. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee.

14. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: *there shall* not *be* a coal to warm at, *nor* fire to sit before it.

15. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, *even* thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

mina. Hactenus non applicuisti huc animum, neque recordata es finis ejus.

8. Nunc verò audi hoc, delicata, sedens confidenter, quæ dicit in corde suo, Ego sum, et nihil amplius; non sedebo vidua, nec sciam orbitatem.

9. Atqui venient tibi ista duo repentè, die uno, orbitas et viduitas; ad perfectionem suam venient super te, ob multitudinem (*vel in multitudine*) divinationum tuarum, et copiam augurum tuorum.

10. Nam confisa fuisti in malitia tua; dixisti, Nemo me videt. Sapientia tua et scientia tua ipsa seduxit te. Et dixisti in corde tuo, Ego, et non amplius.

11. Itaque veniet super te malum, cujus diluculum ignoras; cadet super te contritio, quam non poteris avertere. Veniet repentè vastatio super te, quam nescis.

12. Sta nunc inter divinationes tuas, et in multitudine augurum tuorum, in quibus fatigasti te a pueritia tua; si fortè possis proficere, si fortè robores te.

13. Fatigata es in multitudine conciliorum tuorum, stent nunc et servent colligatores cœlorum, speculatores astrorum, qui lunationes docent, ab iis quæ ventura sunt super te.

14. Ecce erunt quasi stipula; ignis comburet eos; non liberabunt animam suam e manu flammæ; non pruna ad calefaciendum, lumen ad quod sedeatur.

15. Sic tibi erunt cum quibus te fatigasti; negotiatores tui a pueritia tua. Quisque in plagam suam errabit; nemo erit qui te servet.

1. *Come down, and sit in the dust.* Isaiah now explains more fully what he had briefly noticed concerning the counsel of God, and the execution of it. He openly describes the destruction of Babylon; because no hope whatever of the return of the people could be entertained, so long as the Babylonian monarchy flourished. Accordingly, he has connected these two things, namely, the overthrow of that monarchy, and the deliverance of the people which followed it; for the elevated rank of that city was like a deep grave in which the Jews were buried, and, when it had been opened, the Lord brought back his people to their former life.

The use of the imperative mood, "Come down," is more forcible than if he had expressed the same thing in plain words and simple narrative; for he addresses her authoritatively, and as if he were speaking from the judgment-seat; because he proclaims the commands of God, and therefore, with the boldness which his authority entitles him to use, he publishes what shall happen, as we know that God granted this authority to the prophets. "Behold, I have this day set thee over nations and kingdoms, to root out and pull down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." (Jer. i. 10.) There is no power that is not added to the authority of the word. In a word, he intended to place the event immediately before the eye of the Jews; for that change could scarcely be imagined, if God did not thunder from heaven.

Virgin daughter of Babylon. It was a figure of speech frequently employed by Hebrew writers, to call any nation by the title of "Daughter." He calls her "Virgin," not because she was modest or chaste, but because she had been brought up softly and delicately like "virgins," and had never been forced by enemies, as we formerly said when speaking of Sidon.[1] And at the present day the same thing might be said of Venice and some other towns, which have a great abundance of wealth and luxuries, and, in the estimation of men, are accounted very happy; for they have as good reason as the Babylonians had to dread such a revolution of affairs, even when they appear to be far removed from danger.

[1] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. ii. p. 155.

For it shall no longer be. That is, "Thou shalt no longer be caressed by men who thought that thou wast happy.

2. *Take millstones.* The whole of this description tends to shew that there shall be a great change among the Babylonians, so that this city, which was formerly held in the highest honour, shall be sunk in the lowest disgrace, and subjected to outrages of every kind, and thus shall exhibit a striking display of the wrath of God. These are marks of the most degrading slavery, as the meanest slaves were formerly shut up in a mill. The condition of the captives who were reduced to it must therefore have been very miserable; for, in other cases, captives sometimes received from their conquerors mild and gentle treatment. But here he describes a very wretched condition, that believers may not doubt that they shall be permitted freely to depart, when the Babylonians, who had held them prisoners, shall themselves be imprisoned. Now, though we do not read that the nobles of the kingdom were subjected to such contemptuous treatment, it was enough for the fulfilment of this prophecy, that Cyrus, by assigning to them the operations of slaves, degraded them, and compelled them to abstain from honourable employments.

Unbind thy curled locks. On account of their excessive indulgence in magnificence of dress, he again alludes to the attire of young women, by mentioning "curled locks." We know that girls are more eager than they ought to be about curling their hair, and other parts of dress. Here, on the contrary, the Prophet describes a totally different condition and attire; that is, that ignominy, and blackness, and filth shall cover from head to foot those who formerly dazzled all eyes by gaudy finery.

Uncover the limbs. "Virgins" hardly ever are accustomed to walk in public, and, at least, seldom travel on the public roads; but the Prophet says that the Babylonian virgins will be laid under the necessity of crossing the rivers, and with their limbs uncovered.

3. *Thy baseness shall be discovered.* This is the conclusion of the former statement. So long as Babylon was in a flourishing condition, she preserved her reputation, and was

highly honoured; for wealth and power, like veils, often conceal a great number of sores, which, when the veils have been removed, become visible, and are beheld with the greatest disgrace. And, as Demosthenes says, when speaking of Philip's condition,—*ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν ἡμῶν, ἕως μὲν ἂν ἐρρωμένος ᾖ τις, οὐδὲν ἐπαισθάνεται τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα σαθρῶν· ἐπ' ἂν δὲ ἀρρώστημα συμβῇ, πάντα κινεῖται, κἂν ῥῆγμα, κἂν στρέμμα, κἂν αλλό τι τῶν ὑπαρχόντων σαθρῶν ᾖ, οὕτω καὶ τῶν πόλεων, καὶ τῶν τυράννων.* "For as in our bodies, so long as any person is in full vigour, no malady is perceived in any of the members, but if he fall into debility, produced either by a wound or by a strain, or by any other of the diseases to which the body is subject, the whole is affected; so is it with cities and governments." (Dem., Olynth. 2.) When commotions arise, and when their wealth and troops are taken from them, disgraceful transactions which lay concealed are exposed to view; for cruelty, and fraud, and extortions, and perjury, and unjust oppressions, and other crimes, which were honoured during prosperity, being to fall into disgrace.

I will take vengeance, and will not meet (thee) a man. Some think that כ (*caph*) ought here to be supplied, "*As* a man;" as if he had said, "Do not think that ye have to deal with man, whose attack ye may be able to resist." And, indeed, in other passages, when he speaks of the hand of man, it denotes some abatement; but here he means that no remedy is left, because God will reduce them to nothing. Others translate it, "I will not meet a man;" that is, "I will not allow a man to meet me; whoever shall meet me, or intercede in their behalf, I will not spare them, or remit or abate their punishment." This meaning is highly appropriate, but the construction is somewhat forced; for אפגע (*ĕphgăng*) must thus be understood to have a passive sense, which could scarcely be admitted. Besides, the Prophet does not absolutely say that no petition shall be presented to God, but that he cannot be appeased. The former exposition, therefore, flows more smoothly, so far as relates to the context; but let every one choose that which he prefers; for, whatever exposition you adopt, the words amount to this,

"that the Lord will destroy the Babylonians, and that there will be no room for mercy." Only, I say, that I prefer the former, because it is more agreeable to the original text.

4. *Our Redeemer.* The Prophet shews for what purpose the Lord will inflict punishment on the Babylonians; that is, for the salvation of his people, as he had formerly declared. (Isaiah xlv. 4.) But this statement is much more forcible, because he speaks in what may be called an abrupt manner, and like a person awakened out of sleep, when he sees Babylon ruined, which formerly was wont to subdue other nations and trample them under her feet; and he shews that this happens for no other reason than that the Lord shews himself to be the "Redeemer" and defender of his people.

The Holy One of Israel. As if he had said, that not in vain hath he chosen this people, and separated it from other nations. In this transaction he intended to give a display of his power, and on that account added to the title descriptive of his power, *Jehovah of Hosts*, the designation "Holy."

5. *Sit silent.* He continues the same subject, and shews that the end of the Babylonian monarchy is at hand. As this appeared to be incredible, he therefore repeats the same thing by a variety of expressions, and repeats what might have been said in a few words; and thus he brings forward those lively descriptions, in order to place the event, as it were, before their eyes. When he bids her "sit" and be "silent," it is an indication of shame or disgrace. Yet this silence may be contrasted with her former condition, while she reigned; for at that time not only did she speak loudly and authoritatively, but she cried with a loud voice, and by her commands terrified the whole of the East. But now, in consequence of the change of her condition, he bids her "sit silent;" because not only will she not venture to utter terrific words, but she will not even venture to make a gentle sound.[1] But, since he adds, *enter into darkness*, I willingly

[1] "Tant s' en faut qu'elle ose tonner si haut que de coustume, que mesmes elle n'osera desserrer les dents." "So far as she is from venturing to sound as loudly as she was wont to do, that she will not even venture to open her teeth."

adopt the former view, that it denotes shame; for they whose condition has been changed for the worse shut their mouth through shame, and scarcely venture to whisper.

For it shall no longer be. We know that the Babylonian monarchy was very widely extended, and exercised dominion over large and numerous countries; for it was the chief of many kingdoms. On this account the captive people needed to be fortified by these promises, and to be forewarned of her fall, that they might entertain assured hope of deliverance.

6. *I was angry with my people.* This is an anticipation, by which he forewarns the Jews, as he has often done formerly, that the distressing condition of captivity was a scourge which God had inflicted; because, if it had proceeded from any other, there was no remedy in the hand of God. In order, therefore, that they might be convinced that he who had struck them would heal their wounds, he bids them attribute it to their sins that they were so terribly oppressed. Yet he exhorts them to cherish favourable expectation, because God intends to set a limit to the chastisement; and he even mentions this as the reason why the Babylonians shall be destroyed, that God, who is the just avenger of savageness and cruelty, will much more avenge the injuries done to his people.

Thou didst not shew compassion to them. In the former clause he calls the Jews to repentance, because by their own crimes they drew down upon themselves so many calamities. Next, he accuses the Babylonians of having seized this occasion for exercising cruelty, just as if one were to become the executioner of a child whom a father had put into his hands to be chastised. Hence it follows that the Babylonians have no right to be proud, as if by their own power they had subdued the Jews and carried them into captivity; but, on the contrary, because they have wickedly abused the victory and cruelly treated the captives, he will justly punish them.

I profaned my heritage. When he says that he "was angry," and that this was the reason why he "profaned his heritage," let us not imagine that he had changed his purpose, and was offended so far as to cast away the care of his

people and the remembrance of his covenant. This is evident both from the event itself and from his deigning still to call them "his people," though the greater part of them were estranged from him, and though he had the best reasons for "profaning" them. But he has respect to his covenant when he speaks in this manner; for he looks at their source and foundation, that they who were the descendants of Abraham may be accounted the people of God, though very few of them actually belonged to him, and almost all boasted of an empty title.

Thus the word *anger*, in Scripture, must not be supposed to refer to any emotion in God, who desires the salvation of his people, but to ourselves, who provoke him by our transgressions; for he has just cause to be angry, though he does not cease to love us. Accordingly, while he "profanes" his Church, that is, abandons her, and gives her up as a prey to her enemies, still the elect do not perish, and his eternal covenant is not broken. And yet, in the midst of anger, the Lord remembers his mercy, and mitigates the strokes by which he punishes his people, and at length even inflicts punishment on those by whom his people have been cruelly treated. Consequently, if for a time the Lord "profanes" his Church, if she is cruelly oppressed by tyrants, let us not lose courage, but betake ourselves to this promise, "He who avenged this barbarous cruelty of the Babylonians will not less avenge the savageness of those tyrants."

It ought also to be carefully observed that no one should abuse victory so as to be cruel to captives, which we know is often done; for men, when they see that they are stronger, lay aside all humanity, and are changed into wild beasts, and spare neither age nor sex, and altogether forget their condition. After having abused their power, they shall not at length pass unpunished; for "judgment without mercy shall be experienced by those who shewed no mercy." (James ii. 13.)

But it is asked, "How could the Babylonians go beyond the limit which God had assigned to them, as if their lawless passions were laid under no restraint?" And what will become of that promise, "Not a hair shall fall from your head

without the appointment of your Father?" (Luke xxi. 18.) The answer is easy. Though it was not in their power actually to go beyond the limit, yet he looked at their cruelty, because they endeavoured utterly to ruin unhappy persons who had surrendered at discretion. Thus Zechariah complains of the unbridled rage of the Gentiles, because, when "he was angry with his people for a little," they rushed forward with violent fury to destroy them. (Zech. i. 15.)

On the old man. He states an aggravation of their guilt, that they did not spare even "the old men," for whom age naturally procures reverence; and hence he draws an inference, how savage was their cruelty towards armed foes.

7. *And thou saidst, I shall for ever*[1] *be a mistress.* Here he censures the haughtiness of the Babylonians, in promising to themselves perpetual dominion, and in thinking that they could not fall from their elevation through any adverse event. Thus the children of this world are intoxicated by prosperity, and despise all men as compared with themselves; but Isaiah mocks at this confidence, and shews that God regards it with the greatest abhorrence. *To say*, means here to conclude in one's own mind, as will be more clearly evident from what the Prophet says shortly afterwards; for proud men do not publicly speak in this manner, but entertain this conviction, though they pretend the contrary. It is intolerable madness when men, forgetting their frailty, look upon themselves as not sharing in the common lot; for in this way they forget that they are men. Believers, too, have their conviction of being safe, because, under the protecting hand of God, they are prepared boldly to encounter every danger. And yet they do not cease to consider that they are liable to many distresses, because nothing in this world is lasting. Irreligious men, therefore, mock God whenever, through a foolish imagination, they promise to

[1] "He chastises the pride and excessive confidence of Babylon, by which she promised to herself an eternal reign. Thus Rome is called *eternal* in the constitutions of the emperors, and in inscriptions and coins, and also 'The mistress of the whole world, the queen and mistress of the world.'"—*Rosenmüller.*

themselves lasting peace amidst the constant changes of the world.

Hitherto thou hast not applied thy mind to it.[1] For the purpose of heightening the description of their madness, he adds that even a long course of time did not render them more moderate. To become elated immediately after having obtained a victory, is not so wonderful; but to become more fierce from day to day, and to throw out taunts against their captives, was altogether savage and intolerable. This arose, as we have said, from pride; because they did not consider that a revolution of affairs would afterwards take place, or that a condition so magnificent could be changed. Consequently, this is the second reason why the Lord overturned the monarchy of the Babylonians.

And didst not remember her end.[2] Some think that there is a change of the person here, but I consider that to be too forced; and indeed I have no doubt that he speaks of the "end" of Jerusalem, which is the opinion most commonly received. The Lord often speaks of the Church, by way of eminence, (κατ' ἐξοχὴν,) without mentioning the name, as we do when our feelings are powerfully affected towards any person. Now, wicked men do not know the "end" of the Church, and the reason why the Lord chastises her. They mock at the calamities of good men, because they would wish them to be utterly destroyed and ruined, and do not consider that God takes care of them.

If it be objected that the Babylonians could not know this, that is nothing to the purpose; for they could not be ignorant that he was the God whom the Israelites worshipped. Consequently, when they treated the Jews with haughtiness and cruelty, they insulted God himself, as if he

[1] "It will not be inelegant to view עַד (*gnăd*) as meaning *until*, or *so that;* and it is so rendered by Jarchi, who explains this verse thus,—'Thou thoughtest with thyself that thou wouldest perpetually be mistress, and that punishment would not be inflicted on thee; and this thought led thee astray *until* thou didst not recall to mind those afflictions which shall befall thee.'"—*Rosenmüller.*

[2] "The apparent solecism of remembering the future may be solved by observing that the thing forgotten was the knowledge of the future once possessed, just as in common parlance we use the word *hope* in reference to the past, because we hope to find it so, or hope that something now questionable will prove hereafter to be thus and thus."—*Alexander.*

and the covenant which he had made with his people had been intentionally trampled under their feet.

8. *And now hear this, thou delicate woman.* The Prophet again threatens the destruction of Babylon, and employs appropriate words for strengthening the hearts of believers, that the prosperity of the Babylonians may not stupify and lead them to despondency; and yet he does not address Babylon in order to produce an impression upon her, but to comfort believers. He adds, that she was intoxicated with pleasures; for prosperity, being the gift of God, ought not in itself to be condemned, but it is well known how prone the children of the world are to pass from luxury to insolence.

Who saith in her heart. He now explains what is meant by the word *to say*, of which we spoke in the exposition of the preceding verse, namely, that one convinces himself and believes that it will be thus and thus, as proud and insolent men commonly do, although they often conceal it through pretended modesty, and do not wish it to be publicly known.

I am, and there is none besides me. This arrogance, by which she prefers herself to the whole world, is intolerable. First, she thinks that *she is;* secondly, she imagines that the rest of the world does not deserve to be compared to her; thirdly, she promises to herself everlasting repose, for she says, *I shall not sit as a widow.* As to the first, there is none of whom it can be said with truth that *he is*, but God alone, who has a right to say, "I am what I am," (Exod. iii. 14;) for by this mark he is distinguished from the creatures. Thus, he who thinks that he subsists by his own power robs God of the honour due to him, and so Babylon, by exalting herself, made war with God. Secondly, she treated the whole world with contempt, when she preferred herself to it. In this manner proud men begin with God, by representing him to be their enemy, and they end by making all men, without exception, their enemies, through their haughtiness. The third clause, which may be regarded as the copestone of her pride, is, that she considers her condition to be eternal, and does not take into account the liability of the affairs of men to undergo change; for the

higher men have been exalted, they sometimes on that account sink the lower.

9. *But those two things shall suddenly come to thee.* Because Babylon supposed that she was beyond the reach of all danger, the Prophet threatens against her very sore distress. When she said that she would neither be "a widow" nor "childless," he declares on the other hand, that both calamities shall come upon her, so that her miserable destitution shall expose her to the utmost contempt.

In their perfection. That is, "completely," so that in all points, without any exception, she shall be childless. There is also an implied contrast between moderate punishment, some alleviation of which may be expected, and the dreadful vengeance of God, which has no other end than ruin; for, the greater the confidence with which wicked men are elated, the more severely are they punished.

For the multitude of thy divinations. Some render this term *diviners;* but I think that it denotes the act or the vice rather than the persons. Some explain ב (*beth*) to mean "on account of," and understand it to express a cause; and in this sense it frequently occurs in Scripture. Yet it might be suitably interpreted, that the Babylonians shall derive no aid or relief from the deceitful skill in divinations of which they boasted so much; and so it might be translated *notwithstanding*;[1] as if he had said, "The abundance of divinations or auguries shall not prevent these things from happening to Babylon."[2] He ridicules the confidence which they placed in their useless auguries, by which they thought that they foresaw future events; but, as we shall shortly

[1] "Ewald agrees with the English Version and the Vulgate in explaining it to mean *propter*, 'on account of,' and supposing it to be a new specific charge against the Babylonians, by assigning a new cause for their destruction, namely, their cultivation of the occult arts. Gesenius and the other recent writers follow Calvin and Vitringa in making it mean *notwithstanding*, as in Isaiah v. 25, and Numbers xiv. 11. There is then no new charge or reason assigned, but a simple declaration of the insufficiency of superstitious arts to save them. But a better course than either is to give the particle in its proper sense of *in* or *in the midst of*, which suggests both the other ideas, but expresses more, namely, that they should perish in the very act of using these unlawful and unprofitable means of preservation."—*Alexander*.

[2] "Nonobstant la multitude des devins et augures." "Notwithstanding the multitude of divinations and auguries."

afterwards dwell more largely on this point, I readily admit that it is here reckoned to be one of the causes of the vengeance inflicted on them, that, in consequence of trusting to such delusions, they dreaded nothing.[1]

10. *For thou trustedst.* He explains what he said in the preceding verse, though it may be extended further, so as to be a censure of the fraud and oppression and violence and unjust practices by which the Babylonians raised themselves to so great power. Almost all large kingdoms are, what a distinguished robber pronounced them to be, great robberies; for there is no other way in which they enlarge their dominions than by extorting them from others by violence and oppression, and by driving out the lawful owners from their dwellings, that they alone may reign at large.

In thy malice. He gives the name of "malice" to that which he will afterwards adorn with more plausible names, namely, *wisdom* and *knowledge.* In this manner do tyrants usually disguise their tricks, when they lay aside all regard to justice and equity, and cunningly deceive the people; but the Lord detests and exposes them; so that it becomes manifest that it served no purpose to cover their wickedness by useless veils. Thus Job, after having said that "wise men are taken in their own wisdom," explains this by calling it "craftiness." (Job v. 13.)

Thou saidst, No one seeth me. When he adds that Babylon thought that her iniquities were not seen, this refers to free indulgence in sinning; for while men are kept in the discharge of duty by fear or shame, he who neither dreads God as a witness, nor thinks that men will know what he does, breaks out into every kind of licentiousness. It is true, indeed, that even the worst of men are often tormented by the stings of conscience; but, by shutting their eyes, they plunge themselves in stupidity as in a lurking-place, and, in short, harden all their senses. Above all, we see that they have the hardihood to mock God, as if by their craftiness they could dazzle his eyes; for whenever they wish to defraud simpletons, they think it enough that they are not detected, as if they could impose on God. But to no purpose

[1] "Ils ont defié tous dangers." "They defied all dangers."

do they flatter themselves in their cunning, for the Lord will speedily take off the mask from them. All men ought therefore to abhor this wisdom, by which men deceive themselves, and accomplish their own ruin.

I, and there is none beside me. He again repeats those blasphemies, that all may plainly understand how greatly God abhors them, and how near to destruction are all who raise themselves higher than they ought.

11. *Therefore shall evil come upon thee.* Continuing the subject which he had formerly introduced, he ridicules the foolish confidence of the Babylonians, who thought that by the position of the stars they foresaw all events. He therefore says that they shall soon be overtaken by that which Scripture threatens generally against all despisers of God, (1 Thess. v. 3,) that, "when they shall say, Peace and safety, sudden destruction shall overwhelm them," and that at the dawning of the day they shall not know what shall be accomplished in the evening; and it is very clear from the book of Daniel that this happened. (Dan. v. 30.)

12. *Stand now amidst thy divinations.* The Prophet speaks as we are accustomed to speak to desperate men, on whom no warnings produce any good effect; "Do as thou art wont to do; in the end thou shalt be instructed by the event; thou shalt know what good the augurs and soothsayers do thee." By the word "stand" he alludes to the custom of the augurs, who remain unmoved in one place till some sign is seen.[1] In like manner, the astrologers mark out their divisions in the heavens, even to the minutest points. If it shall be thought preferable to translate חבריך (*chăbārīm*) *diviners* instead of *divinations*, I shall not greatly object; for the meaning of the word is ambiguous.

If perhaps thou shalt prevail. As if he had said, "Thou shalt not be able, by the aid of thy augurs, to mitigate the calamity which is about to overtake thee." He taunts their perverse confidence on this ground, that when they shall have made every attempt, no advantage will follow.

13. *Thou hast wearied thyself.* He now declares still

[1] "Jusqu' a ce que quelque oiseau soit apparu." "Till some bird is seen."

more plainly what he had formerly expressed in somewhat obscure language; that all the schemes which Babylon had previously adopted would lead to her ruin; for she nourished within herself a vain confidence arising from a belief of her power and wisdom, as if nothing could do her injury.

In the multitude of thy counsels. He calls them not only "counsels," but "a multitude of counsels," in order to declare that there is no good reason for being puffed up or exalting themselves, whatever may be the ingenuity or skill of their efforts to deceive; because their crafty counsels, the more numerous and the more plausible they are, will give them the greater annoyance. This is a general statement against those who, trusting to their own ability, contrive and form counsels of every sort, and, relying on their prudence, collect all the stratagems and annoyances that can be invented for oppressing others; for God scatters all their contrivances, and overturns their fraudulent designs, as he threatened that all unlawful means would be unsuccessful. "They dare," says he, "to take counsel, but not from me; they weave a web, but not from my Spirit." (Isaiah xxx. 1.)

Thus do the consultations of many persons altogether fail of success, because they do not ask counsel of God, from whom (James i. 5) all wisdom should be sought; for, the more they toil, the greater annoyance do they suffer, and they can obtain no advantage. Well does David[1] say, (Psalm cxxvii. 2,) that "in vain do they toil who rise early in the morning, and go late to rest, and eat the bread of sorrow;" for he speaks of unbelievers, who do not cast their cares on the Lord, but, trusting to their industry, make many daring efforts. The Lord ridicules this confidence, and causes them to be at length disappointed, and to feel how worthless are all their wicked labours and efforts, and how in this way they are punished for their rashness; while at the same time "the beloved of God sleep pleasantly," as is said in that passage. Not that they are freed from all annoyances, but that they do not weary themselves with useless labour, and they commit to God the result of all their affairs.

[1] In the Latin original the word is "Solomon," and not "David;" but this oversight has been corrected in the French Version.—*Ed.*

Let them stand now. Here we perceive what counsellors are chiefly meant by the Prophet, that is, those diviners who boasted to the people of the empty name of science; as if they understood all future events by looking at the stars. But we have formerly spoken of that judicial astrology, and of its uselessness. If it be objected, that it was not in the power of those men to mitigate the dangers which were hanging over them, I reply, the Babylonians would have done it at their suggestion, if they had foreseen the calamity; and, since they did not foresee it, the conclusion is, that their art had no foundation whatever. It is idle to pretend, as some do, that the Prophet reproves unskilfulness in the art, and not the art itself; for he addresses the Babylonians, who were the authors of this science.

The binders of the heavens. He says wittily that they "bind the heavens;" because they utter their decisions as boldly as if, by binding and tying the stars, they held mankind in chains. Yet, if any one choose to render the term "inchanters," the meaning will not be inapplicable, and both are denoted by the verb חבר (*chābăr*). Although to observe the position of the stars is not in itself sinful, the Prophet says that it is carried farther than is proper by those who draw from it conclusions as to doubtful events, and appears indirectly to contrast those observers with the prophets, in order to make them more detested, because they extinguish all divine predictions; for, when men attach to the stars a fatal necessity, all the judgments of God must fall to the ground.

14. *Behold, they shall be as stubble.* With still greater eagerness he attacks those astrologers who strengthened the pride of Babylon by their empty boasting; for impostors of this sort are wont to take away all fear of God out of the hearts of men, by ascribing everything to the stars, so that nothing is left to the providence of God. Hence arises contempt of God and of all his threatenings; for punishments are not ascribed to the judgment of God, but to some fate and relation of things which they foolishly imagine. For this reason he kindles into such indignation against the Babylonians, and says that they shall be burning "stubble," which is quickly consumed; for he does not compare them

to wood, which is of some use for giving heat, but to "stubble," in order to shew that nothing is so light or useless.

15. *So shall they be to thee.* After having threatened destruction to those astronomers, he again returns to the Babylonians, and threatens that they must not look for assistance from that quarter from which they expected it, and that they ought not to rely on those vain counsels, with which they had long and eagerly vexed themselves in vain.

He calls them *dealers*, or, as we commonly say, *traffickers;* a metaphor taken from merchants, who are skilled in innumerable arts of deceiving, and in impostures of every kind; for the princes do not consult in a manner suitable to their rank, but traffic in disgraceful transactions.[1] Though we may extend this to all the allies by whom the Babylonians were aided, yet the Prophet has his eye chiefly on the diviners. When he adds, *from thy youth*, he aggravates the guilt of Babylon, in having been infected with this foolish belief from an ancient date, and in having held this error as if it had been born with her.

Every one to his own quarter.[2] It is supposed that the Prophet here speaks of the flight of the astrologers, that every one shall provide for his own safety; and I fully agree with this, but think that there is also an allusion to the "quarters" of the heavens, which astrologers divide and measure, so as to deduce their prognostications from them. He therefore ridicules their vain boasting. "They shall withdraw into their quarters, but they shall go astray, and there shall be no means of protection. If any one choose to apply it to the revolt of those whose assistance

[1] "It becomes a question whether these are called traders in the literal and ordinary sense, or at least in that of national allies and negotiators; or whether the epithet is given in contempt to the astrologers and wise men of the foregoing context, as trafficking or dealing in imposture. J. D. Michaelis supposes them to be described as travelling dealers, that is, pedlars and hawkers, who removed from place to place, lest their frauds should be discovered. He even compares them with the gipsy fortune-tellers of our own day, but admits that the astrologers of Babylonia held a very different position in society."—*Alexander.*

[2] "That is, wherever each person can depart, they disperse and wander, so that every person pursues his own road, for rescuing himself from danger, by fleeing to the farthest boundaries of the kingdom of Babylon. —*Rosenmüller.*

Babylon thought that at any time she could easily obtain, I have no objection.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

1. Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah; which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, *but* not in truth, nor in righteousness.

2. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel: The Lord of hosts *is* his name.

3. I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did *them* suddenly, and they came to pass.

4. Because I knew that thou *art* obstinate, and thy neck *is* an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;

5. I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to pass I shewed *it* thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them; and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.

6. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare *it?* I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.

7. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.

8. Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time *that* thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

9. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.

1. Audite hoc, domus Iacob, qui vocamini nomine Israelis, qui de aquis Iuda exierunt, qui jurant in nomine Iehovæ, et Dei Israel recordantur, non in veritate, neque in justitia.

2. Quoniam ab urbe sancta denominantur, et innituntur Deo Israel, cujus nomen Iehova exercituum.

3. Priora jam olim annuntiavi, ex ore meo egressa sunt; publicavi ea, repente feci, et venerunt.

4. Quia cognovi quòd durus sis, et nervus ferreus cervix tua, et frons tua ænea.

5. Annuntiavi tibi jam olim; antequam venirent indicavi tibi, ne fortè diceres, Idolum meum fecit hæc, sculptile meum et conflatile meum præcepit ea.

6. Audisti, vide omnia; et vos nonne annuntiabitis? Feci te jam nunc audire nova et abscondita, quæ nesciebas.

7. Nunc primùm creata sunt, non jam olim, neque successu temporis; non audieras ea; ne dicas, Ecce noveram.

8. Certè non audieras; certè non noveras; certè non fuit pridem aperta auris tua; quia sciebam quòd transgrediendo transgressurus esses. Ideo rebellem ab utero vocavi te.

9. Propter nomen meum differam furorem meum, et in laudem meam moderabor mihi erga te, ut te non succidam.

10. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

11. For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do *it:* for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

12. Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he: I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.

13. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they stand up together.

14. All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these *things?* The Lord hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm *shall be* on the Chaldeans.

15. I, *even* I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

16. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

17. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I *am* the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go.

18. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

19. Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.

20. Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans; with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it *even* to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob.

10. Ecce examinavi te, et non instar argenti; elegi te in fornace afflictionis.

11. Propter me, propter me faciam; nam quomodo profanabitur nomen meum? Et gloriam meam alteri non dabo.

12. Audi me, Iacob, et Israel, vocate mi. Ego ipse, ego primus; adhuc ego novissimus.

13. Utique manus mea fundavit terram, et dextera mea palmo mensa est (*vel, sustinuit*) cœlos. Vocate me eos, adstant (*vel, adstabunt*) pariter.

14. Congregamini vos omnes, et audite. Quis in eis annuntians ista? Iehova dilexit eum, et voluntatem ejus exequetur in Babylone, et brachium (*vel, opus*) ejus in Chaldæis.

15. Ego, ego locutus sum, utique vocavi eum, adduxi eum; ideo prosperè habebit in via sua.

16. Accedite ad me, audite hoc. Non ab initio in abscondito locutus sum. Ex quo res facta est, ibi fui. Et nunc Dominus Iehova misit me, et Spiritus ejus.

17. Sic dixit Iehova redemptor tuus, Sanctus Israelis. Ego Iehova Deus tuus, docens te utiliter; dirigens te per viam qua incedis.

18. O si attendisses ad mandata mea! Tunc fuisset uti fluvius pax tua, et justitia tua ut fluctus maris.

19. Fuisset ut arena semen tuum, et filii uteri ut lapilli ejus. Non succideretur, neque aboleretur nomen ejus a conspectu meo.

20. Exite e Babel, fugite a Chaldæis. Voce exultationis annuntiate hoc, divulgate, efferte usque ad extremum terræ. Dicite, Redemit Iehova servum suum Iacob.

21. And they thirsted not *when* he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

22. *There is* no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.

21. Itaque non sitierunt cum per solitudines duxit eos; aquam fecit illis fluere e petra, scidit petram, et fluxerunt aquæ.

22. Non est pax, dixit Iehova impiis.

1. *Hear this, O house of Jacob.* He now addresses his discourse to the Jews, whom also he had chiefly in his eye, in the whole of the preceding chapter; for he was not sent to the Babylonians, but addresses them in such a manner as to wish that the Jews, to whom he had been especially appointed, should hear him. Accordingly, he foretold the destruction of the Babylonians, that the Jews might calmly wait for deliverance, and at the same time might not be terrified by the greatness and power of their enemies,[1] and that, relying on these promises, they might stand unmoved against all temptations. But because the Jews were obstinate, and did not believe those promises, and because Isaiah foresaw how great would be their hard-heartedness and obstinacy during their captivity, for that reason he reproves them with greater severity. Ezekiel shews still more clearly how inveterate was their unbelief, when they murmured against God, and cast away all confidence, and cared no more about the promises of God than about empty fables. It was not without reason, therefore, that Isaiah made use of such vehement language, in order to shew that they offered the highest insult to God by refusing to rely on his grace.

Who are called by the name of Israel. He addresses "Israel," but that which was actually spurious, and which at that time had nothing more than the name of "Israel;" for he does not employ this honourable name for the sake of mentioning them in a respectful manner, but rather in order to put to shame their false boasting, because they had no right to glory in this empty title, from the truth of which they were widely estranged. Why did God honour Jacob with this name, but because he proved himself to be courageous and invincible in adversity? This appeared from that wrestling in which he contended with God; for when

[1] "De leurs ennemis."

the Lord tries by various afflictions, he enters, as it were, into debate with us. (Gen. xxxii. 25.) How, then, did this name apply to his posterity, if they were cast down and threw away all hope in adversity?

Who have come out from the waters of Judah. He next reproaches them with being descended from the holy fathers, and yet being utterly unlike them. By "the waters of Judah," he means metaphorically the source and fountain from which the Jews proceeded; for I do not approve of the childish attempt of the Jewish writers to explain the metaphor, which is borrowed in a highly natural manner from waters which flow from a distant place.

Who swear by the name of Jehovah. Having censured them for being the degenerate and wicked children of holy fathers, he adds that they falsely pretend to the worship of God, and to a semblance of piety from which they are widely distant. Now, as "swearing" is a kind of worship of God, he here puts one department for the whole class, by a figure of speech, in which a part is taken for the whole. As idolaters offer an insult to God, when they swear by their idols, in like manner do the sincere worshippers of God render honour to God, by employing his name in oaths; for they acknowledge that they have one God, in whose name they glory. But here he attacks hypocrites who, with open mouth, loudly boasted of the name of God, and frequently mentioned his name, and yet in their hearts were greatly opposed to him. On this account he says, *not in truth nor in righteousness.* He employs the word "righteousness," to denote integrity and sincerity of heart, without which nothing can be acceptable to God; or rather "righteousness" and "truth" are synonymous terms; as if he had said, that it was mere pretence and hypocrisy to profess that they were the people of the true God, because their treachery openly proclaimed their falsehood.

2. *For from the holy city they are called.* He continues the same subject, and by different words exposes their false boasting; for they falsely boasted that they were the citizens of "the holy city," which they defiled by their vices and crimes. Jerusalem ought to have been "holy," for God

had consecrated her to himself; but she had prostrated herself to iniquities, so great and so numerous, that she scarcely retained any holiness. We see in Psalm xv. 2, and xxiv. 4, what the true citizens of Jerusalem ought to be; but because the Jews were not ashamed of mocking God, they reckoned it enough to be protected by the shadow of the Temple.

And rely on the God of Israel. When he says that they "rely on Jehovah," he does not speak of sincere belief, but of empty confidence; for, as good men rely on God, and trust him with their whole heart, so hypocrites falsely make pretensions to his name, and are intoxicated by unfounded belief, and fearlessly despise everything, and even boast confidently of these words, "God will assist us, he will not cast off his people;" as if God wished to encourage their wickedness. In a word, by trampling him under their feet, they loudly declare that they rely on themselves for safety; but, lest they should think that they will not be punished for this mockery, the Prophet assures them that God loses nothing of his authority, when he is thus misrepresented by hypocrites; for, when he calls him *Jehovah of hosts*, he adds this by way of threatening, that they might know that God, under whose name they falsely sheltered themselves, was strong enough to punish them, and at length would not permit them to make him the subject of mockery.

3. *Long ago have I declared the former things.* He accuses the Jews of ingratitude, because they distrust God, who has given every possible proof of his goodness, in order to establish them in sincere confidence; and therefore he takes away from them every excuse, by saying, that "he declared the former things." He appears to speak not of their deliverance from Babylon, but of other benefits which the Lord had bestowed on that nation; as if he had said that God began, long before this, to foretell to his people what would happen, and never promised anything which he did not perform, and yet that his people, after having received so many proofs, did not place confidence in his certain and infallible truth.

It may also be said, that the Prophet did not merely address those who lived at that time, but those who should afterwards live during the captivity, in order that, when

this certainty arrived, they might consider that it had been already foretold. God intended that this prediction should be widely known, in order that, during their captivity, they might know that these things did not happen by chance, and that they might obtain some consolation. Isaiah therefore rebukes them, because, after having learned the truth of this matter from the event itself, still they cannot acknowledge the work of God, or place confidence in him.

And justly does he severely reprove and accuse them of obstinacy; for they resisted God, who stretched out his hand to them, and rejected his grace; they did not believe that they would have liberty to return to Judea, and, when the way was opened up, there were very few who had courage to return. Some thought that it would be better to remain in Babylon than to undergo the annoyances and dangers of the journey. Others suspected that Cyrus had made a crafty proclamation of liberty to return, in order that, having ascertained their dispositions, he might oppress them or treat them with severity; and they did not take into account that God had foretold these things, and that they must unavoidably happen, and that no power of men could prevent them. Accordingly, I understand those predictions of which the Prophet speaks so as to include, indeed, the ancient prophecies by which God foretold to Abraham (Gen. xv. 13) that his seed would be held captive, and would afterwards be restored to their former freedom, but that afterwards, in their due order, other predictions are added, which also followed at different times; for this also was frequently fulfilled, partly at one time, and partly at another. He shews, therefore, that the Lord predicted nothing which was not justified by the event.

4. *For I knew that thou art obstinate.* Literally it is, "On account of my knowing," or, "From my knowing." Here the Lord solemnly declares by the Prophet, that it was on account of the hard-heartedness of the people that he spake of future events; as if he had said that he acted more liberally towards them than he ought to have done. Not that this was the only end which he aimed at; for we know that the chief use of doctrine belongs to believers, who

gently submit themselves and cheerfully obey; but Isaiah, who had to deal with obstinate men, justly says that, if their depravity had not been incurable, God made use of an excellent remedy, by uttering many successive predictions for the purpose of ratifying his Law. Thus as he had foretold future events to the fathers, so he shews that he follows the same course, in order to conquer or soften the obstinacy and hard-heartedness of the people.

And thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy forehead is of brass. He calls their neck "an iron sinew," because it cannot be bent. "Sinews" are indeed hard, but still they are capable of being bent; here, he says, there is no bending, because they are untameable. He next mentions "a brazen forehead," to denote their impudence. There are two ways by which we may be kept in the path of duty; first, if we are submissive and obey good instructions or holy commandments; and secondly, if, after having fallen into any sin, we are moved by sincere shame to repent of what we have done. When these are wanting, it is a sign of desperate wickedness. These are two proofs, therefore, which he has brought forward to shew that the nation was abandoned to everything that was sinful; they were refractory, and they were impudent. And yet, when the Lord cannot cure us in any other way, he treats even our perversity with such forbearance, that he is pleased to give us warning of future events. Thus he assumes, as it were, every possible shape, in order to recall us to himself, and bring us back into the right path.

5. *I foretold to thee long ago.* He again repeats the same statement, that the people, when they had been delivered from Babylon, might acknowledge the kindness of God, and might not ascribe this deliverance to idols or to fortune. If it be asked "Why does the Prophet mention idols, seeing that the Jews professed the worship of one God?" I reply, They had been corrupted by associating with the Gentiles, and had degenerated into superstitions, to such an extent, that they had entirely forgotten God. Ezekiel complains of this, that, in the vision in which he appeared to be carried to Jerusalem, he beheld the sanctuary of God polluted by

various idols. (Ezek. viii. 3.) Not without reason, therefore, does he recall them to God as the only author of these events, that they may acknowledge that he has redeemed them.

Lest, perhaps, thou shouldest say. He means that the Jews will be inexcusable, if they do not acknowledge the kindness of God, when they shall have been emancipated from slavery; for what had been long ago foretold would not have happened by chance. God's foreknowledge is therefore connected by the Prophet with his power; and he declares that he not only foresaw, but likewise accomplished these events. Here then, as in a mirror, we behold the wicked exercise of our understanding, which always contrives in what way it shall rob God of the praise which is due to him. Whenever he either assists us, or in any way is kind to us, he may be said to stretch out his hand and invite us to himself.

Yet the world, as if it purposely designed to make resistance, ascribes to others what has proceeded from God; as we see that in Popery all God's benefits are attributed to dead saints, in such a manner as if God were sleeping a deep sleep. It is therefore necessary that the lamp of doctrine should shine, in order to regulate our judgment; for, in considering the works of God, we shall always go astray, if he do not go before and enlighten us by his word. But even now we find in many persons what Isaiah deplores in his nation, that, even after having been warned, they do not cease to make idols for themselves, which they clothe with the spoils taken from God. Peter and John loudly declared (Acts iii. 12) that it was not by their own merits or excellence that they performed their miracles; but we see how the Papists load them with miracles against their will, and in spite of their resistance. Although God does not now foretell the events which shall happen, yet the doctrine of the Law and of the Gospel will tend as powerfully to condemn our ingratitude as if the prophecies had attested those works of which God there declares himself to be the author.

6. *Thou hast heard.* This makes it still more clear that the Prophet speaks of a future captivity, and of the redemption by which it should be followed; thus intending to make provision for the advantage both of the men of his own time

and of posterity, that, if they who then lived received no benefit, at least posterity might take warning and repent. It frequently happens, that the doctrine of the prophets produces little effect on those who see and hear, and sometimes is even treated by them with contempt, while posterity receive it with better dispositions.

See all. When he bids them *see,* some think that the Prophet exhibits the event in such a manner as if he had said, that God had spoken nothing which had not been made evident to be true. But I give a different interpretation of this word חֲזֵה, (*chăzēh,*) *see,* in this manner: "Seeing that the Lord hath spoken, it is thy duty to examine the words, and to give attention." Hence we ought to observe, that it is owing to our sluggishness or indolence that we immediately lose those things which proceed from the mouth of God, and that in vain do many persons hold out the pretext of ignorance; because the Lord reveals clearly enough all that is necessary to be known, if they who hear would examine it carefully, and with due attention.

And will ye not declare it? The Lord next demands something more from his people than to understand and consider his word; that is, that they may be a herald and witness of the miracles which they have known by experience. And, indeed, he instructs his people on this condition, that they shall afterwards lead others to the same confession of faith. *Even now have I made thee to hear.* As if he had said, "Observe this day, on which the Lord foretells to thee, by my mouth, those things which thou didst not know; for these things cannot be perceived or foreseen by human conjecture."

7. *Now for the first time have they been created.* The Prophet shews that he is not reasoning about things that are known, or that have been learned by actual experience; and his object is, not merely to correct that haughtiness which is natural to all men, (for they claim for themselves what belongeth to God alone,) but likewise that no part of this event may be ascribed to fortune or to any other cause. In various ways do men rob God of the glory that is due to him, and direct all their faculties towards distributing among the

creatures that which belongs to Him alone, so as to leave Him nothing but a bare and empty name. That the people might not think that they had been vanquished by the power of the Babylonians, or that it was by human strength or by chance that they were afterwards restored to liberty, on this account he so frequently repeats and reiterates, that this is the work of God.

Thou hadst not heard those things. When he affirms that "they had not heard them," some explain this to mean that the people rejected God's warnings, and did not listen to good counsels. But I think that the Prophet's meaning was different, namely, that what could not be known by human sagacity, and what had been unknown to the Jews, has been revealed in such a manner that they cannot defraud the Holy Spirit of the praise which is due to him; and this is very evident from the context.

8. *I knew that by transgressing thou wouldest transgress.* By these words the Lord means that it is not without good reason that he so earnestly persuades and entreats the people to acknowledge that it was by him that they were chastised and afterwards delivered from so great distresses. The rebelliousness of that people might have prompted them to complain that it was useless to repeat this so often, and to press it on their attention. The Prophet replies, that men need not wonder at it, because he has to deal with obstinate men; and thus he confirms by different words what he said a little before about "the iron sinew of their neck." (Ver. 4.) The meaning amounts to this, that the forwardness of that nation was well known to God, and that consequently he left nothing undone which was fitted to retain those who were attached to his service; and that, having received abundant evidence from undoubted proofs, they were so much the more inexcusable.

Therefore have I called thee a rebel from the womb. After having torn off the mask from this nation, which, as we formerly saw,[1] falsely boasted of the name of Israel, he gives them a new name, and calls them "rebels." By the "womb" I understand to be meant, not their first origin when they

[1] See page 466.

began to be reckoned a nation, but the time when they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt; for that deliverance might be regarded as a sort of nativity of the Church. (Exod. xii. 51.) But the people, though they had experienced the infinite goodness of God, did not cease to act treacherously towards him, and transgressed more and more, so that he justly calls them "rebels and transgressors."

9. *For my name's sake.* After having reproached the people with that malice which was natural to their fathers from the beginning, and which had passed down to children and grandchildren, he now reminds them that it is owing to his mercy that they survive, but that otherwise they would have deserved a thousand times to perish. This warning served two purposes; first, believers needed to be supported, that during their captivity they might not lose courage; and secondly, when they had received permission to return, it was not of less importance that they should be humbled, that they might acknowledge that they were indebted for their deliverance to nothing else than God's undeserved goodness.

So as not to cut thee off. Hence we see that the object of the preceding remonstrance was, that the people might know that it is not owing to their merit that the Lord stretches out his hand to bring them out of the grave of Babylon; for they deserved to be utterly ruined. Consequently, that the Lord now spares us also, that he mitigates or remits punishment, and, in a word, that he pays any attention to us, all this is entirely the result of his grace; so that we ought not to ascribe it to any merits or satisfactions of men. And thus, as we have formerly explained at other passages, the distinction made by the Sophists falls to the ground, as to the remission of punishment which they refuse to admit to be undeserved, because satisfaction is made to the justice of God. But here Isaiah declares that remission is made by free grace "for God's name's sake;" for he speaks of punishment which he might justly have inflicted on the Jews. He had the justest cause for destroying this nation, if he had not determined to defend his glory.

10. *Lo, I have tried thee.* The Lord shews that he exer-

cises such moderation in chastising his people, that he makes provision for their salvation. Formerly he had said that he had spared or would spare them, because he had regard to his glory. He now declares that he does indeed lay stripes upon them, but of such a nature as to be serviceable to them; for it is for the purpose of "proving and trying" that he chastises them, and we "prove" that which we do not wish to be lost. Since therefore he has this end in view, it follows that he makes provision for our salvation. Besides, it is by way of anticipation that he mentions the "trial," lest any one should object that God's forbearance did not at all appear amidst such severe afflictions. The Prophet therefore comes forward early to meet this objection, and points out that, although God does not permit his people altogether to go free, yet he deals gently with them.

And not like silver. He adds that he does not "try us like silver," because we should be altogether consumed; for "silver" contains something that is pure, but in us nothing will be found but chaff; and even if God did not make us "silver," we should be reduced, like chaff or stubble, to ashes and to nothing. Chastisement itself would undoubtedly bring out nothing that is pure. Accordingly, in the very "trial" the Lord considers what we can endure, so as not to proceed beyond measure; and, at the same time, by the secret influence of his Spirit, he makes those punishments to be profitable to us which would otherwise have been destruction.

I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. To "choose" means here to "distinguish." We "choose" that which we desire to preserve and defend, as he formerly said in the same sense, "to *choose* the good and refuse the bad." (Isaiah vii. 15.) By this word, therefore, he shews how wide is the difference between the punishment which is inflicted on good men and that which wicked men endure, and which ends in their destruction. We, on the other hand, though the Lord burns and pierces us, are accepted by him; and he retains his kindness toward us in the midst of afflictions, and even causes us to come out of them more fully tried, and to be to him a sacrifice of good savour. In a word, he means that

God, even when he appears to abandon his people to destruction, is still gracious to them.

11. *For my own sake.* He repeats the same statement which he had formerly made, but adds a question, such as Hebrew writers are wont to employ, when they speak of what is absurd, "Is it possible that my name should be profaned?"

And I will not give my glory to another. This second clause is added for the purpose of exposition; and therefore Isaiah, by multiplying the forms of expression, now adorns that which he had formerly expressed in a few words, and elevates his style. Nor is it a mere explanation of the former statement, but rather an adornment in order to confirm it the more. By these words he means that men do all that lies in their power to "profane the name of God," and to convey "his glory to another," but that the Lord, by his wonderful providence, meets this evil, and causes his glory to remain unabated. Although, therefore, by our fault we abandon the glory of God, yet he will preserve it, while he shall be our protector. Hence we derive wonderful consolation, that God connects our salvation with his own glory, as we have already pointed out on other passages.

I will not give. That is, "I will not suffer my glory to be taken from me." This would have happened, if the God of Israel had been mocked on account of the ruin and destruction of the people; as wicked men, when the people of God were oppressed, were wont to taunt them with blasphemies of this sort, "Where is their God?" (Psalm lxxix. 10.) Moses also assigned a similar reason why the Lord was unwilling to destroy the whole nation. "Lest perhaps," says he, "their enemies should claim it for themselves, and say, It is our lofty hand, and not the Lord, that hath done all this." (Deut. xxxii. 27.) And indeed, when the Lord, by exhibiting tokens of his anger, strikes terror into believers, there remains no refuge but this, that he will remember his adoption, so as not to expose his sacred name to the curses of wicked men. Nor did the Prophet, by these words, merely exhort his people to gratitude, that they might acknowledge that it was exclusively through the

grace of God that they were preserved; but he held out to believers a ground of supplication, and a shield by which they might resist despair.[1]

12. *Hearken to me, O Jacob.* We have formerly explained[2] the reason why the Lord declares his eternity. It is, that we may know that he is always like himself, and that we may not measure him by our capacity. He bids us "hearken to him;" because we are led into errors and are carried away by false opinions, in consequence of refusing to lend our ears to him.

And Israel, my called. When he says that "Israel has been called by him," he indirectly contrasts this statement with the reprobation mentioned by him at the beginning of the chapter; for he shewed that the Jews falsely assumed this name, and idly gloried in it, inasmuch as they did not prove themselves to be true Israelites. Here, on the contrary, he affirms that "Israel is his called." Just as if a father, in rebuking his son, should call him a bastard, and yet should afterwards acknowledge him to be his son, so the Lord shews that the Jews are so greatly degenerated that he might justly reject them, but that, although they do not deserve so high an honour as to belong to his family, still he pays regard to his calling, which no ingratitude or wickedness of men can set aside.

I, even I. In this passage the particle אַף, (*ăph,*) *even,* denotes continuance; for he lays down nothing else than that God is always like himself, and does not, like men, undergo change or alter his counsel. (Rom. iii. 3, 4; xi. 29.) On this account he says that he is *the first and the last.*[3] But here it ought also to be observed, that Isaiah does not speak of God's eternal essence, but applies this doctrine to our use, that we may know that he will be to us the same that he has always been, and next, that we may

[1] "Mais pareillement a mis une priere en la bouche, et un bouclier au bras des fideles pour resister à la tentation." "But at the same time put a prayer into the mouth, and a shield on the arms, of believers, for resisting temptation."

[2] See pp. 250, 364.

[3] "That is, his nature is eternal, he depends on none, he is the beginning and end of all things, as in Isaiah xli. 4; xliv. 6."—*Rosenmüller.*

remember to distinguish him from idols, lest our understandings, led away by extravagant inventions, should fall off from the fear of him.

13. *Surely my hand hath founded the earth.* Here the Prophet explains more clearly what he meant in the preceding verse. After having spoken of God's constant and unvarying will toward us, he likewise praises God's power as manifested by the works which we daily behold. In these works the Lord may be said to present himself to our view; and, coming forth from his sanctuary, he approaches to us by means of them.

And my right hand hath measured, or, *hath upheld the heavens.* Whether we translate טִפְּחָה, (*tĭppĕchāh,*) "Hath measured," or, "Hath upheld," the meaning will be the same; and we need not give ourselves much trouble about the interpretation of the word. By the word "measure" is denoted God's amazing wisdom in having adjusted on all sides, with such exact proportion, the vast extent of the heavens, so that it is neither nearer to the earth nor farther from it than is advantageous for preserving order, and that in this prodigious expanse there is nothing jarring or unseemly. If we prefer the word "uphold," this also is an extraordinary commendation of the wisdom and power of God, in "upholding" the huge mass of the heavens in continual motion, so that it neither totters nor leans more to one side than to another.

When I call them, they stand up, or, *shall stand up together.* This latter clause, in which he says that all things are ready at his command, is attended by some greater difficulty; for it may refer either to the first creation or to the continual government of the world. If we refer it to the first creation, the future יַעַמְדוּ, (*yăgnămdū,*) *they shall stand,* will be put for a preterite. "As soon as the Lord commanded them to appear, they instantly obeyed;" as the Psalmist says, "He spake, and they were done." (Psalm xxxiii. 9.) But if we adopt this meaning, the word *equally,* which he adds, may appear not to agree well with the history of the creation as related by Moses; for heaven and earth were not created and beautified at one moment, but at first everything was shape-

less and confused, and afterwards the Lord reduced them to order. (Gen. i. 2-6.) The answer is easy; for the Prophet means nothing more than that the Lord, by the mere expression of his will, created all things, and gave to heaven and earth their form, so that they immediately obeyed his command.

Yet I willingly extend it to the continual government of the world; as if he had said, "Heaven and earth yield to the authority of the Lord and obey his voice, and those bodies which are at the greatest distance from each other move of their own accord with astonishing harmony, as if they were carried about by the same motion of a wheel. Though heaven is separated from the earth by a wide space, yet the voice of the Lord is everywhere heard. He needs no messengers to convey his will, but by the slightest expression he executes everything at the very moment." Is there any prince who has his servants everywhere rendering to him instant obedience? Certainly not. Thus, the power of God is infinite, is diffused far and wide, and extends to every part of the world, as Scripture declares, (Ps. xlvii. 2,) and as we learn by the instructions of faith.

14. *Assemble, all of you, and hear.* There can be no doubt that the Prophet addresses the Jews, though here he utters nothing that ought not to be acknowledged by all. But because unbelieving and irreligious men have no ears, on this account he does not invite them to "hear." We know that the Jews enjoyed this privilege above other nations, that God revealed himself to them. (Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20; Rom. iii. 2.) "God is known in Judea," says the Psalmist, "his name is great in Israel." (Ps. lxxvi. 1.) So much the less excusable was either their slothfulness or their obstinacy, in paying scarcely any regard to their own prosperity. Whence arose their great levity or proneness to revolt, but from their undervaluing or despising the inestimable treasure of heavenly doctrine? They therefore deserved to be sharply and severely rebuked by the Prophet, who now exclaims against them, indirectly remarking that they wickedly and perversely agree among themselves to cast into the shade the grace of God.

Who among them foretelleth those things? Here God ap-

pears to permit the Jews to bring forward publicly any objection which they can make, as those who trust to the goodness of their cause venture to taunt their adversaries: "Produce thy arguments; if thou possessest any acuteness, shew it." Of his own accord, therefore, he makes an attack upon them, and gives them permission to shew, if they can find any argument to that effect, that such things were foretold by the gods of the Gentiles. We may also extend it to the diviners and augurs, who claimed for themselves the knowledge of future events, and who could not at all foresee such things. With the same view he will repeat what follows in the next verse, "It is I, it is I who have spoken." The object of the whole is to shew that the Jews waver, and even fall away, in consequence of not estimating sufficiently how extraordinary a blessing it is to learn from the sacred mouth of God all that is necessary for their salvation.

Jehovah hath loved him, and he shall execute his pleasure on Babylon. He points out a single instance, that God had now deigned to foretell to them the end of their captivity in Babylon. Cyrus is not named by him as the dispenser of this favour, but, as if he were speaking of a man who was known and ascertained, he says, without mentioning the name, that God has chosen him to take Babylon by force. The word *loved* is not employed in an absolute sense, but (πρὸς τι) with reference to a particular object; and therefore it is limited to the successful result of the expedition. In like manner Saul, with reference to a particular object, was dear to God, so that he reigned for a time, and was even endued with the gift of prophecy. (1 Sam. x. 10.) The case is different with believers, whom God has embraced with an unchangeable love, and whom he never permits to fall away from him. He intimates that Cyrus will take Babylon by force, in consequence of having undertaken this work by God's appointment and direction, not indeed intentionally on his part, but in such a manner as God makes even the ignorant and blind to go where he pleases, or compels them against their will to yield obedience; for the Prophet does not applaud Cyrus for voluntary obedience, but rather magnifies the providence of God, by which he leads all men to execute his counsel.

And his arm.[1] Some read the word "arm" in the nominative, and others in the accusative case; but it makes little difference as to the meaning. *Arm* may here be taken for "work," and in a metaphorical sense; and thus the passage will read more smoothly. "He will execute his counsel on Babylon, his work on the Babylonians;" for we know that it is a distinguishing peculiarity in the style of the prophets to join together "the work of the Lord" and his "counsel." Indirectly he reproaches the Jews with their ingratitude in refusing to believe the promises of God, though he points out the event, as it were, with the finger, and speaks in a very different manner from that in which either diviners or false gods are accustomed to speak. In a word, he wishes to convince the Jews that the taking of Babylon by storm shall be "the work of the Lord," under whose direction Cyrus shall execute it, in order that the Church may at length be delivered.

15. *Therefore he shall prosper in his way.* He again reminds the Jews of the predictions, and claims for God this honour, that, by foretelling the event in due time, he has removed all doubt; and next he adds, that all that had been foretold shall be accomplished. Accordingly, in the repetition of the pronoun, *It is I, it is I who have spoken*, there is a double emphasis; first, that none but the God of Israel hath spoken about future and hidden events, and secondly, that, because he is faithful and never deceives, all the events which he has foretold shall undoubtedly take place. Accordingly, in the last clause of the verse I consider the copulative ו (*vau*) to mean *therefore*. Here Isaiah has two objects in view; first, that the captive Jews may expect deliverance, and

[1] "'And his arm shall be seen (or shall be visible) in the land of the Babylonians.' Here he speaks of Cyrus."—*Jarchi*. "Others, without supplying ב, (*beth*,) suppose that this phrase contains an aposiopesis, and read the words thus: 'And his arm the Babylonians,' that is, 'And his arm (shall strike or shall make war upon) the Babylonians.' Kocher, thinking that in the words וזרועו כשדים (*ūzĕrōgnō kassedim*) there is no ellipsis, explains them to mean, 'And the Babylonians his arm,' that is, they shall be his supporters. 'For,' adds he, 'their aid was of no small consequence, if what Xenophon (Cyroped. iv. 24; v. 11) has recorded about Gobryas and Gadates, who were Babylonians, be true. Thus, allies, friends, and any one that assists another, are accounted to be his *arm*.'" —*Rosenmüller*.

secondly, that, after having been delivered, they may acknowledge God to be the author of so valuable a blessing, and may not imagine that it took place either by the assistance of men or by chance.

Surely I have called him, I have conducted him. He declares that everything shall go prosperously with Cyrus, because Jehovah "hath called him;" not that he deserved so high a favour, or obtained it by his own industry or power, but because the Lord was pleased to employ the agency of Cyrus in delivering his people. As to his calling him *beloved* in the preceding verse, and now saying that he has been "called and conducted," I explained a little before that this cannot refer to the love of God, by which he adopts us to be his children and calls us to himself; for in this sense Cyrus was not "beloved" or "called." Though he was endowed with great virtues, yet he was stained by very great vices, ambition and the lust of power, avarice, cruelty, and other vices; and his lamentable end shewed what kind of person he was. The Prophet therefore means that God was favourable to Cyrus, so as to bestow upon him an external blessing, but not so as to adopt him, and to impart to him that grace which he bestows on the elect. We must consider the reason why he calls him by these names. It is because he makes use of the agency of Cyrus for delivering the Church, as we have already explained.[1]

16. *Draw near to me, hear this.* He again addresses the Jews, and, by bidding them draw near, goes out, as it were, to meet them, and to receive them kindly. Yet at the same time he indirectly glances at their revolt, shewing that they would not be capable of receiving sound doctrine, if they did not withdraw from error. It was no small crime that they were so far removed from God, to whom they ought to have been united in a friendly manner. They were at a great distance from him, not as to space, but as to the agreement of the heart. The "drawing near," therefore, means that we should lay aside our natural dispositions and be ready to hear him. And this must proceed from his grace; for we can never be prepared to do this, if he do not lead us to himself.

[1] See page 394.

Not from the beginning have I spoken in secret. Commentators explain this passage in various ways. Many apply it to Christ, though the Prophet meant no such thing; but we ought to guard against violent and forced interpretations. Others explain it as relating to the Prophet himself, but that is not more suitable; for this discourse would not be applicable to a man. I think, therefore, that Isaiah introduces God as speaking, in order to reproach the people with ingratitude, because "from the beginning," that is, from the time that he began to reveal himself to their fathers, he did not speak obscurely or secretly. Hence it follows, that all the ignorance that was in them ought to be ascribed to their depravity, because of their own accord they forsook the light.

From the time that it was done, I was there. When he says that he was present at the time that the event occurred, the meaning is, that what he had uttered with his mouth was carried into execution by his strength and by his power. Justly, therefore, does he affirm that he gave tokens of his presence, when, by accomplishing all things, he not only proved the truth of the predictions by the event itself, but shewed that those things which are supposed to be accidental are governed by his authority. In a word, he mentions the ancient promises of God and the fulfilment of them, in order to shew that God will always be like himself. Those who say that Isaiah will be present in spirit, when the Lord shall bring back his people, torture the Prophet's words, and produce nothing that agrees with his meaning.

And now Jehovah hath sent me. Isaiah now begins to speak of himself, and applies this statement to the preceding doctrine, and testifies that that God, who hath spoken from the beginning, now speaketh by him, and consequently that we ought to believe those things which God now speaketh by him, in the same manner as if he were visibly present. Hence we ought to draw a useful doctrine, namely, that all the miracles which the Lord has performed ought to be brought to our remembrance, that we may confirm his truth in our hearts. It is no slight argument, that the Lord had from the beginning a distinct people, whom he taught, to whom he made sure promises, and to whom he performed those

promises, and whom he never deceived, even in the smallest matter; for all things were performed and fulfilled in due time. Whenever, therefore, any doubt arises, we ought to betake ourselves to these examples, "God hath always assisted his people; not now, for the first time, hath he spoken to them, and he did not deceive his people by words which were dark or ambiguous, but spoke plainly and clearly." Thus the Prophet declares that he brings forward nothing of his own, but that he was sent by God, who has proved himself to be faithful.

And his Spirit. He mentions "the Spirit," not as if he meant something different from God, because he is of the same essence with him; for in one essence of God we acknowledge Three Persons; but he names "The Spirit," because He is the only teacher and director of all the prophets. Paul says, that "no man can say that Jesus is Christ, but by the Spirit," and a little after he says that "the gifts of God are various, but that it is one and the same Spirit who worketh all things in all. (1 Cor. xii. 3, 6.) This passage is also a clear proof of the divinity of the Spirit, since the prophets are sent by him; for it belongs to God alone to send them, as it is by the authority of the prince alone that ambassadors are sent; and since the Spirit does this,—since he directs them, and gives to them power and efficacy, unquestionably he is God.

From this passage we learn also, that they who have not this direction of the Spirit, though they boast of having been sent by God, ought to be rejected; such as those Popish bands of wolves which glory in the name of pastors and teachers, and impudently boast of their mission, though they are altogether opposed to the Spirit of God, and to his doctrine. In vain do they boast of having been sent or authorized by God, when they are not adorned with the gifts of the Spirit, which are necessary for the execution of such an office. To pretend to having the inspiration of the Spirit, while they are entirely destitute of faith, and have not even the slightest spark of doctrine, is excessively disgusting. Let us suppose an assembly of mitred bishops, the greater part of whom are known to be ignorant, and among three hundred

of whom there shall scarcely be found ten who have a moderate share of the rudiments of piety; what could be more foolish than for such an assembly to boast of being governed by "the Spirit?"

17. *Thus saith Jehovah.* I connect this verse with the four following verses, because they relate to the same subject, and because in them the Lord promises deliverance to his people, but in such a manner as first to shew that it was through their own fault that they were reduced to slavery; that is, that the people might not murmur and object that it would have been better to be kept in their native country, if the Lord wished to assist them, than to be carried away and brought back; for physicians who cure a disease which they might have prevented, are held to be less entitled to thanks. The Prophet therefore meets this, and says that this befell the people through their own fault, and that they might have escaped this destruction, if they had attended to the commandments of the Lord. He shews, therefore, that this was a just reward of the wickedness of the people; for it was not the Lord who had formerly prevented the people from enjoying prosperity, but they had rejected his grace. And yet he declares that the Lord will go beyond this wickedness by his goodness, because he will not suffer his people to perish, though he afflict them for a time.

Teaching thee profitably. He means that God's "teaching" is such that it might keep the people safe and sound, if they would only rest upon it. Now, the Lord "teaches," not for his own sake, but in order to promote our salvation; for what profit could we yield to him? It is therefore by "teaching" that he makes provision for the advantage of each of us, that, having been instructed by it, we may enjoy prosperity. But since, through our ingratitude, we reject the benefit that is freely offered to us, what remains but that we shall miserably perish? Justly, therefore, does Isaiah reproach the Jews that, if they had not defrauded themselves of the benefit of teaching, nothing that was profitable for their salvation would have been hidden from them. And if these things were said of the Law, that the Lord, by means of it, "taught his people profitably," what shall we

say of the Gospel, in which everything that is profitable for us is very fully explained ?[1]

Hence, also, it is manifest, how shocking is the blasphemy of the Papists who say that the reading of the Holy Scripture is dangerous and hurtful, in order to terrify unlearned persons[2] from reading it. Shall they then accuse God of falsehood, who declares, by the mouth of the Prophet, that it is "profitable ?" Do they wish us to believe them rather than God ? Though they impudently vomit out their blasphemies, we certainly ought not to be dissuaded from the study of it ; for we shall learn by actual experience with what truthfulness Isaiah spoke, if we treat the Holy Scriptures with piety and reverence.

Leading thee. These words shew more clearly the profitableness which was mentioned a little before. He means that the way of salvation is pointed out to us, if we hearken to God when he speaks ; for he is ready to become our guide during the whole course of our life, if we will only obey him. In this manner Moses testifies that he "set before the people life and death." (Deut. xxx. 19.) Again, it is said, (Isaiah xxx. 21,) "This is the way, walk ye in it ;" for the rule of a holy life is contained in the Law, which cannot deceive. "I command thee," says Moses, "that thou love the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways, and keep his commandments and statutes and judgments, that thou mayest live and be multiplied, and that the Lord may bless thee in the land which thou goest to possess." (Deut. xxx. 16.) In a word, they who submissively yield obedience are not destitute either of counsel or of the light of understanding.

[1] "When God the Redeemer says here that he 'teacheth his people, להועיל (*lĕhōgnīl*) to profit,' and that he provides for their true interests, there can be no doubt that he makes this declaration concerning himself, (*κατ' ἀντίθεσιν*) by way of contrast with Idols, false gods, the worship of which not only did no good, but even did harm, and brought great hurt and damage to their worshippers. (Compare Isaiah xliv. 10, and xlv. 19.) Hence also God says by Jeremiah, (ii. 11,) 'Is there any nation that changeth its gods, though they are not gods ? But my people have changed their glory בלא יועיל (*bĕlō yōgnīl*) for that from which they derive no advantage ;' or rather, from which they suffer the greatest loss and damage." —*Vitringa.*

[2] "Afin de destourner les idiots (qu'ils appellent) de lire dedans." "In order to dissuade idiots (as they call them) from reading it."

18. *O if thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!* As the people might complain of being carried into captivity, the Prophet, intending to meet those murmurs, points out the cause, which was, that they did not submit to the doctrine of salvation, and did not allow themselves to derive any advantage from it. He undoubtedly alludes to the song of Moses, in which very nearly the same form of expression occurs, "O that they were wise, and that they understood!" (Deut. xxxii. 29.) לוּא (*lū*) denotes a wish, *O if!* or, *Would that!*

Not only does the Lord expostulate with the Jews for having disregarded the advantage, or "profitableness," (verse 17,) which was offered to them, but like a father, he deplores the wretchedness of his children; for he takes no pleasure in our distresses, and is not severe, unless when we constrain him by our wickedness. This is therefore a figurative appropriation of human affections, by which God compassionates the ruin of those who chose rather to perish of their own accord than to be saved; for he was ready to bestow blessings of every kind, if we did not drive him away by our obstinacy. Yet it would be foolish to attempt to penetrate into his secret counsel, and to inquire why he did not add the efficacy of the Spirit to the external word; for nothing is said here about his power, but there is only a reproof of the hard-heartedness of men, that they may be rendered inexcusable. Certainly, whenever God invites us to himself, there is clearly laid before us, in his word, complete happiness, which we wickedly reject.

Then would thy peace have been as a river. The word *peace*, as we have formerly explained,[1] denotes all prosperous events. It is as if he had said, "The richest plenty of spiritual blessings would have flowed to thee abundantly, and thou wouldest have had no occasion to dread any change; because the blessing of God upon believers is never dried up.

And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. We might explain *righteousness*, which he connects with *peace*, to mean what is expressed by the familiar phrase (*ton bon droict*) "thy right." But I choose rather to understand by the

[1] See Commentary on Isaiah, vol. i. p 312; vol. ii. pp. 214, 227.

word "Righteousness" a well regulated commonwealth, in which everything is administered in a regular and orderly manner; as if he had said, "Thou wouldest have had everything well conducted at home, and wouldest have had plenty and abundance of all things." And properly does he connect this condition with "peace;" for when government is overturned, everything goes wrong and is out of order, and it is utterly impossible that we shall enjoy "peace," if there be not "righteousness," that is, a just and equitable administration of affairs. If, therefore, we are desirous of "peace," let us likewise wish to have that blessed condition on which the Lord bestows his blessing. Here some commentators speculate about spiritual "righteousness," and the forgiveness of sins; but they wander far from the Prophet's meaning, which is plain and obvious.

19. *Thy seed would have been as the sand.* This also relates to a happy life, when progeny is multiplied, by whose aid the labours of the old are alleviated, and which "resists the adversaries in the gate." The Psalmist compares such children to "arrows shot by a strong hand," and pronounces him to be "blessed who hath his quiver full of them;" that is, who has a large number of such children. (Psalm cxxvii. 4, 5.)

When he mentions *sand*, he appears to allude to the promise which was made to Abraham, "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea-shore." (Gen. xxii. 17.) And he repeats the same sentiment in various words; according to the usage of the Hebrew writings, substituting *children* for "seed," and *small stones* for "sand." In a word, he shews that the people prevented God from causing them to enjoy the fruit of that promise.

His name would not have been cut off. Coming down to the interruption of this favour, he next reproaches them in more direct terms with having sought for dispersion, after having been miraculously collected by the hand of God; for by the word *name* he means the lawful condition of the people, which would always have flourished, if the blessing had not been turned aside from its course. What he says about the people having been "cut off," must be understood to refer

to the land of Canaan, from which the people of God had been cast out, and thus appeared to have been thrust out of their Father's house; for the Temple, of which they were deprived, was a symbol of God's presence, and the land itself was a pledge or earnest of a blessed inheritance. Being driven into captivity, therefore, the people appeared to have been cut off and banished from the presence of God, and had no token of the divine assistance, if the Lord had not soothed their affliction by those promises. Now, we ought carefully to observe this distress, that, when they had been banished into a distant country, they had no temple, or sacrifices, or religious assemblies; for they who in the present day have no form of a Church,[1] no use of sacraments, and no administration of the word, ought to look upon themselves as being in some measure cast out from the presence of God, and should learn to desire, and continually to ask by earnest prayer, the restoration of the Church.

20. *Go out of Babylon.* This is the second clause of this remonstrance, in which the Lord solemnly declares that he will be the Redeemer of his people, though they have been unworthy and ungrateful. After having declared that he performed the office of a good teacher, but that the people refused to hearken to him, so that by their own fault they drew down on themselves the punishment of captivity, he now declares his unwearied forbearance, by adding that he will still assist them, in order to bring them out of slavery. He therefore commands them to go out of the land of Babylon, in which they were captives. Hence we see that God, in his unspeakable goodness, though he has just cause to remonstrate with us, yet relieves our afflictions, and assists those who had been unworthy, and even who had insolently rejected his grace.

With the voice of rejoicing. This relates to the confirmation of the deliverance, for he intended to give assurance to a promise which was altogether incredible. In order, therefore, to remove all doubt, he employed lofty language in extolling this blessing.

[1] "Nulle forme d'Eglise."

Tell it. He describes the strength of that confidence by which he wished to encourage the Jews; for we are wont to utter loudly and boldly those things of which we are certain, and, if we have any doubt, we scarcely venture to speak, and are dumb. Isaiah speaks of a future event as if it had actually arrived, that the people might cherish in their hearts greater and stronger confidence. He makes use of the imperative mood, which is much more forcible, and produces a more powerful impression on our minds, than if he had expressed his meaning in plain terms.

21. *Therefore they thirsted not.* Because the Jews did not see the way opened up for their return, and because great and dangerous wildernesses intervened, the Prophet asserts the power of God, and brings forward examples of it, that they may not be terrified by any difficulty. He therefore bids them consider whether or not God had sufficient power to rescue their fathers from the slavery of Egypt, and to lead them through desolate wildernesses, in which he supplied them with food and water and everything that was necessary for them. (Exod. xvi. and xvii.; Numb. xx.) Here the Jews, according to their custom, contrive absurd fables, and invent miracles which were never performed; and they do this, not through ignorance, but through presumption, by which anything that is plausible, though there be no ground whatever for it, easily gains their support.

The design of the Prophet was to recall to their remembrance the former departure from Egypt, and the miracles which the Lord performed at that time, which we have already remarked to be customary with the Prophets, when they wish to extol in lofty terms the works of God. Thus David, when he was celebrating the victories which he had obtained, says that "the mountains trembled and flowed down, that the air was cleft asunder, and that the Lord was seen from heaven," (Psalm xviii. 7,) though nothing of this kind ever happened to him; but he imitates the description of the deliverance from Egypt, in order to shew that God, who was the author of it, had also been his supporter and leader in conquering his enemies, and that the

power of God ought not to be less acknowledged in his victory than in those signs and wonders.

In like manner the Prophet wishes that the people should now contemplate those miracles, in order to correct their unbelief, and that they may not be tempted by any distrust. The holy servants of God were always accustomed to cast their eyes on that deliverance, in order that, by the remembrance of so great a benefit, they might strengthen the hearts of all in hope and confidence; as we have formerly said that it was the duty of believers in every age to expect the fruit of this redemption, that the Lord, by uninterrupted progress, might be the guardian of a redeemed people. Thus Isaiah means that the Lord will easily surmount every obstacle, will open up a way which is shut, and will supply them abundantly with water, so that they shall not die of thirst, in the same manner as he formerly brought water out of rock by an extraordinary miracle, when the people thought that their condition was hopeless; and consequently, that there is no reason why they should despair of their return, if they wish to contemplate, and cordially to believe, that power of God which they have already experienced.

22. *There is no peace, saith Jehovah to the wicked.* These words, "saith the Lord," are included by some commentators in a parenthesis; but we view them as having this connection with what goes before, that the Lord denies to wicked men that "peace" of which they are unworthy.[1] And this is expressly added, that hypocrites might not, according to their custom, cherish false confidence in these promises; for he declares that the promises do not belong to them, in order to shut them out altogether from the hope of salvation. But Isaiah appears also to have had his eye on something else; for, since the greater part of the people, under the influence of impiety, rejected this blessing, many weak and feeble persons might hesitate and might be terrified by the opinion of the multitude;[2] as in our own day we see feeble consciences

[1] Our author means that, instead of reading the words thus, "There is no peace to the wicked, saith Jehovah," he prefers to read them, "Jehovah saith to the wicked, There is no peace."—*Ed.*

[2] "These words relate to those Jews who, being obstinately devoted to idolatry, and having settled down in Babylon, chose to remain there rather

disturbed, when they see the greater part of men despise the doctrine of salvation. Beholding many persons placed in danger, he turns away their minds from such a temptation, that they may not be troubled by the multitude of wicked and unbelieving men, who reject the grace of God and this prosperous condition, but that, without paying any regard to those men, they may embrace and enjoy this benefit.

than to return to their native country and the religious worship of Jehovah. He declares, therefore, that such persons shall not have the happiness that is promised to those who shall return to their native habitations."—*Rosenmüller.*

A TRANSLATION

OF

CALVIN'S VERSION

OF

THE PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH.

CHAPTERS XXXIII.—XLVIII.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

1 Wo to thee that spoilest,
And was not spoiled;
Who dealest wickedly,
And they dealt not wickedly with thee!
When thou shalt have ceased to spoil,
Thou shalt be spoiled;
When thou shalt have ceased to deal wickedly,
They shall deal wickedly with thee.

2 O Jehovah, have pity upon us;
We have hoped in thee;
Be thou, who hast been their arm in the morning,
Our salvation also in the time of trouble.
3 At the voice of the tumult the people fled;
At thy exaltation the nations were dispersed.
4 And your prey shall be gathered by your gathering of caterpillars,
Advancing thither, according to the running of locusts.

5 Jehovah is exalted, who dwelleth on high;
He hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.
6 And the stability of thy times shall be
Strength, salvation, wisdom, and knowledge;
The fear of Jehovah is his treasure.

7 Behold, their messengers shall cry without;
The ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.
8 The roads are deserted,
The traveller hath ceased;

He hath violated the treaty,
He hath despised the cities,
He hath paid no regard to any man.
9 The earth hath mourned and languished;
Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down;
Sharon hath been made like a wilderness;
Bashan and Carmel have been shaken.
10 Now will I arise, saith Jehovah;
Now will I be exalted;
Now will I lift up myself.
11 Ye shall conceive chaff;
Ye shall bring forth stubble;
The fire of your breath shall devour you.
12 And the peoples shall be the burnings of lime;[1]
As thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire.

13 Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done;
Ye that are near, acknowledge my power.
14 The sinners in Zion are afraid;
Terror hath seized the hypocrites.[2]
Which of us[3] shall dwell with devouring fire?
Which of us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?
15 He who walketh in righteousnesses and speaketh what is right;
Who despiseth the gain from violence and calumny;
Who shaketh his hands from accepting a bribe;
Who stoppeth his ear, that he may not hear blood;
Who shutteth his eyes, that he may not see evil.
16 He shall dwell in high places;
Fortifications of rocks shall be his refuge;
Bread shall be given to him,
And his waters (shall be) sure.
17 Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty;
They shall behold the land (that is) very far off.
18 Thine heart shall meditate terror.
Where is the scribe? where is the weigher?
Where is he who singleth out the principal houses?
19 The fierce people thou shalt not see,
The people of a confused lip, so that thou canst not understand;
Of a stammering tongue, so that thou canst not comprehend.

20 Look at Zion, the city of our solemnities;[4]
Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a peaceful habitation,
A tent which shall not be carried away,
The stakes of which shall never be removed,
And of which none of the ropes shall be broken:
21 Thus[5] shall the mighty Jehovah there be to us
A place of streams, of broad rivers,

[1] Or, Burnt lime. [2] Or, The wicked. [3] Or, Who instead of us?
[4] Or, Of our assemblies. [5] Or, For if.

Through which there shall not pass a ship with oars,
And through which a splendid ship shall not pass.
22 For Jehovah is our Judge;
Jehovah is our Lawgiver;
Jehovah is our King;
He himself will save us.
23 Thy cords were loosed,
So that they did not fasten their mast,
Nor spread the sail;
Then was the prey of much spoil divided,
The lame also seized the prey.
24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick;
The people that dwell in it have been freed from iniquity.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

1 Draw near, ye nations, to hear;
And ye peoples, hearken.
Let the earth hear, and its fulness;
The world, and all its productions.
2 For the indignation of Jehovah is on all nations,
And his fury on all their army;
He hath destroyed them;
He hath delivered them to slaughter.
3 Their slain shall be cast out;
And from their carcases shall come up their stench;
And the mountains shall melt on account of their blood.
4 And all the armies of heaven shall fade away,
And shall be rolled up as a scroll.
The heavens and all their armies shall fall down,
As a leaf falleth down from a vine,
And as it falleth from the fig-tree.
5 For my sword is made drunken in the heavens.
Behold, it shall come down on Edom,
Even on the people of my curse to judgment.
6 The sword of Jehovah hath been filled with blood;
It hath been made fat with fatness;
Even with the blood of lambs and of goats,
With the fat of the kidneys of rams;
For the sacrifice of Jehovah is on Bozrah,
And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
7 And the unicorns shall come down with them,
And the bullocks with the bulls;
And their land shall be made drunken with blood,
And their dust shall be made fat with fatness.
8 For (it is) the day of vengeance of Jehovah,
The year of recompenses for the cause of Zion.
9 And her streams shall be turned into pitch,
And her dust into brimstone;

And her land shall become burning pitch.
10 By night and by day it shall not be quenched;
Its smoke shall continually go up;
From generation to generation it shall lie waste;
None shall pass through it for ever and ever.
11 Therefore shall the pelican and the owl take possession of it;
The great owl and the raven shall dwell in it;
And he shall stretch over it the cord of emptiness,
And the plummets of vanity.
12 They shall call her nobles without a kingdom,
And all her princes shall be nothing.
13 In her palaces she shall bring forth thorns,
And nettles and thistles in her fortresses;
And she shall be a habitation for dragons,
And an abode for the young ones of the ostrich.
14 And the wild beasts shall meet with the satyrs;
And the screech-owl shall cry to his companion;
There also shall the fairy dwell,
And shall find for herself a peaceful abode.
15 There shall the owl make her nest, and lay,
And hatch and gather her young under her shadow;
Yea, there shall the vultures be gathered together,
Every one with her mate.
16 Inquire at the book of Jehovah, and read.
Not one of those shall fail;
Not one shall want her mate;
For his mouth hath commanded,
And his Spirit hath gathered them.
17 And he hath cast the lot for them;
And his hand hath divided it to them for ever, as by a cord.
Therefore they shall inhabit it;
From generation to generation they shall dwell in it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

1 The wilderness and the desert shall be glad;
The loathsome place shall rejoice,
And shall flourish like the lily.
2 Flourishing it shall flourish,
And shall even rejoice with rejoicing, and shall sing;
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
The beauty of Carmel and Sharon;
They shall see the glory of Jehovah,
The majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen ye the weak hands,
Confirm the tottering knees.
4 Say to them that are trembling in heart,
Be strong, fear not.

Behold, your God will come with vengeance;
God himself will come with a recompense,[1]
And will save you.
5 Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be opened.
6 Then shall the lame man leap like a stag,
The tongue of the dumb man shall sound loudly;
For waters shall be digged in the desert,
And rivers in the wilderness.
7 The dry place shall be changed into a pool,
And the parched country into fountains of waters;
And in the habitation of dragons,
And in its lair,
Shall be a place for the reed and the rush.
8 And a path shall be there, and a way,
And it shall be called, The holy way.
An unclean person shall not pass through it;
And he shall be to them one that walketh in the way,
That fools may not go astray.
9 There shall not be there a lion;
Nor shall a wild beast go up by it;
Neither shall it be found there;
That the redeemed may walk.
10 Therefore shall the redeemed of Jehovah return,
And shall come to Zion with rejoicing;
And everlasting joy shall be on their head;
And they shall obtain joy and gladness;
And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

1 It came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the de-
2 fenced cities of Judah, and took them. Then the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish, with a powerful army, to Jerusalem, to king Hezekiah, who stood at the conduit of the upper
3 pool, in the way of the fuller's field. And there came out to him Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, who was over the house, and Shebna the chancellor, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the secretary.
4 And Rabshakeh said to them: Say now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this in which thou trustest? I have said, (only a word of the
5 lips,) Counsel and strength for war. Now, in whom hast thou
6 trusted, that thou hast rebelled against me? Behold, thou hast trusted in that broken staff of reed, on Egypt, on which if one lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it. Such is Pharaoh.
7 king of Egypt, to all who have confidence in him. And if thou shalt say to me, We trust in Jehovah our God; is it not

[1] Or, He will come with the recompense of God.

he whose high places and altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship be-
8 fore this altar? Now, come, give a hostage to my master, the king of Assyria. I will give thee two thousand horses; wilt
9 thou have horsemen to set upon them? And how dost thou despise the face of one captain of the least of my master's
10 servants, and place thy confidence in Egypt for chariots and horsemen? And have I now come up without Jehovah to this land, to destroy it? Jehovah said to me: Go up against this land, to destroy it.
11 Then said Eliakim, and Shebna, and Joah, to Rabshakeh: Speak, I pray, to thy servants, in the Syrian language, (for we understand it,) and speak not to us in the Jewish language,
12 in the hearing of the people who are on the wall. And Rabshakeh said: Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak those words? Is it not to the men who sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own urine with you?
13 Therefore Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jewish language, and said: Hear the words of the great
14 king, the king of Assyria. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah impose upon you, for he will not be able to deliver you.
15 And let not Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah, saying, By delivering will Jehovah deliver us; this city shall not be
16 given up into the hand of the king of Assyria. Listen not to Hezekiah; for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make with me a blessing, and come out; and let every one eat of his own vine, and let every one eat of his own fig-tree, and let
17 every one drink the waters of his own well. Till I come and take you into a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.
18 Lest perhaps Hezekiah deceive you, saying, Jehovah will deliver us. Have any of the gods of the nations delivered
19 their land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where is the god of Hamath and Arpad? Where is the god of Sephar-
20 vaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who is there among all the gods of those lands that hath delivered his land out of my hand; that Jehovah should rescue Jerusalem out of my hand?
21 They were silent, and did not answer him a word; for this was the commandment of the king, Do not answer him. Then came Eliakim, who was over the house, and Shebna the chancellor, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the secretary, to Hezekiah, with rent garments, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

1 Now, it came to pass, that Hezekiah, when he heard this, rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went

2 into the house of Jehovah. At the same time he sent Elia-
kim, who was over the palace, and Shebna the chancellor, and
the eldest of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah
3 the son of Amoz, the prophet. Who said to him, Thus saith
Hezekiah, This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of
blasphemy; for the children have come to the birth, and
4 there is not strength to bring forth. If, perhaps, Jehovah thy
God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master, the
king of Assyria, hath sent to curse the living God, and to
rebuke with words which Jehovah thy God hath heard. Thou
shalt therefore lift up a prayer for the remnant that is still left.
5, 6 The servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. And Isaiah
said to them, Thus shall ye say to your master: Thus saith
Jehovah, Fear not the words which thou hast heard, with
which the servants of the king of Assyria have reproached
7 me. Behold, I will bring a wind upon him; for he shall hear
a report, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause
him to fall by the sword in his own land.
8 And Rabshakeh, having returned, found the king of As-
syria besieging Libnah; for he had heard that he was departed
9 from Lachish. And hearing concerning Tirhakah, king of
Ethiopia, He hath gone out to fight against thee; after hav-
10 ing heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying: Thus
shall ye say to Hezekiah king of Judah: Let not thy God, in
whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not
11 be given up into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold,
thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all
lands, how they have destroyed them; and shalt thou be
12 delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered those
whom my fathers destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph,
13 and the children of Edom, who were in Bithlassar? Where
is the king of Hamath, the king of Arphad, the king of the
city of Sepharvaim, of Hena and Iva?
14 Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messen
gers, and read it, and went up to the house of Jehovah, and
15 spread it before Jehovah. Then Hezekiah prayed to God,
16 saying: O Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel, who dwellest be-
tween the cherubim, thou alone art God over all the king-
17 doms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. In-
cline thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine eyes, O
Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib,
18 who hath sent to reproach the living God. Truly, O Jehovah,
the kings of Assyria have destroyed all the nations, and their
19 land, And have cast their gods into the fire; for they were
not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood, and stone; there-
20 fore they have destroyed them. And now, O Jehovah our
God, save us from his hand; that all the kingdoms of the
earth may know that thou alone art Jehovah.
21 Then Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent to Hezekiah, saying:

Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Since thou hast prayed
22 to me concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria; This is the
word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him:
The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee, hath laughed
at thee;
The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.
23 Whom hast thou reproached?
And whom hast thou blasphemed?
Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice,
And lifted up thy hands on high?
Even against the Holy One of Israel.
24 By the hand of thy servants thou hast reproached the Lord,
And hast said, By the multitude of my chariots I will go up,
To the heights of the mountains,
To the sides of Lebanon;
I will cut down the tallest of her cedars,
Her choice firs;
Then will I come to the height of his border,
And even to his level forest.[1]
25 I will dig, and will drink waters;
With the sole of my feet I will dry up all the lakes of the siege.
26 Hast thou not heard that I made it long ago,
That I formed it from ancient days?
And should I now bring it to be a desolation,
To be heaps of ruins, like fortified cities?
27 For their inhabitants were maimed,
Were terrified and confounded;
They were made like the grass of the field and the green herb,
Like the grass of the house-tops, which withereth before it
is ripe.

28 I know thy sitting down, and thy going out,
And thy entrance, and thy indignation against me.
29 Because thou wast angry against me,
Thy tumult hath come up into my ears.
Therefore will I put my hook[2] in thy nostril,
And my bridle in thy lips,
And will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.
30 And this shall be a sign to thee;
Thou shalt eat this year that which groweth of itself,
And in the second year that which springeth up of itself;
And in the third year ye shall sow and reap,
And shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.
31 And that which shall be preserved of the house of Judah,
And that which shall be left,
Shall yet strike root downward,
And shall bear fruit upward.

[1] Or, To the forest of his plain. [2] Or, My ring.

32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant,
And that which shall be preserved of Mount Zion.
The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will do this.

33 Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria,
He shall not enter into this city,
Nor throw an arrow into it;
And he who is defended by a shield shall not seize it,
Nor cast a balister against it.
34 By the way that he came shall he return,
And shall not enter into this city, saith Jehovah.
35 And I will be a protector to this city,
To save it, for my own sake,
And for the sake of my servant David.
36 And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when the people arose early in the morning, behold, they
37 were all corpses of dead men. Then Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed, and went, and returned, and dwelt in
38 Nineveh. And it came to pass, while he was worshipping his god in the temple of Nisroch,[1] that his sons, Adrammelech and Sharezar, smote him with the sword, and fled into the land of Armenia; and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came to him, and said to him: Thus saith Jehovah, Give charge concerning thy house;[2] for
2 thou shalt die, and shalt not live. Then Hezekiah turned his
3 face to the wall, and prayed to Jehovah. And he said, I beseech thee, O Jehovah, remember now that I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done what was right in thine eyes. And Hezekiah wept with sore weep-
4 ing.[3] Then was communicated the word of Jehovah to
5 Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah: Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Jacob thy father: I have heard thy prayer, and have seen thy tears: Behold, I add to thy days fifteen
6 years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will be a protector to this city.
7 And this shall be a sign to thee from Jehovah, that Jehovah
8 will do this thing, of which he hath spoken: Behold, I bring back the shadow of degrees, by which it hath gone down on the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees. And the sun went back on the sun-dial ten degrees, by which it had already gone down.

[1] Or, While he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch, his god.
[2] Or, Give charge to thy house.
[3] "Et Ezechias pleura amerement." "And Hezekiah wept bitterly."

9 The writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick, and had recovered from his sickness.

10 I said in the cutting off of my days,
I shall go to the gates of the grave;
I am deprived of the residue of my years.

11 I said, I shall not see God,
God in the land of the living;
I shall no longer behold man with the inhabitants of the world.

12 My habitation is departed,
And is removed from me as a shepherd's tent;
I have cut off, as a weaver, my life:
From lifting up[1] he will cut me off;
From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

13 I reckoned[2] till the dawn;
As a lion, so he hath broken my bones;
From the dawn till night thou wilt make an end of me.

14 As a crane or a swallow, I chattered;
I mourned as a dove.
My eyes were lifted up on high.
O Lord, it hath oppressed me; comfort me.

15 What shall I say?
He who hath spoken to me hath done it.
I shall be moved[3] all the days of my life
In the bitterness of my soul.

16 O Lord, by all who shall live beyond those (years)
Shall the life of my spirit (be known;)
And that thou didst cause me to sleep,
And didst make me alive.

17 Behold, in peace my bitterness was bitter;
And thou hast been pleased (to rescue) my soul from the pit;[4]
For thou hast cast behind thy back all my sins.

18 For hell shall not confess thee;
Death shall not praise thee;
They that go down into the pit shall not wait for thy truth.

19 The living, the living, he shall confess to thee,
As I (do) this day;
The father to the sons shall make known thy truth.

20 Jehovah to save me; and we will sing our songs
All the days of our life in the house of Jehovah.

21 Now, Isaiah had said, They shall take a mass of figs, and
22 apply it to the boil, and they shall live. For[5] Hezekiah had said, What is the sign that I shall go up into the house of the Lord?

[1] Or, Through leanness; or, Through sickness; or, By taking away.
[2] Or, I determined; or, I laid down.
[3] Or, I shall walk trembling.
[4] Or, Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of destruction.
[5] Or, Now.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

1 At that time Merodach-Baladan, son of Baladan, king of
Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, after having
2 heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. And Hezekiah was glad on account of them, and shewed to them the
house of his treasure, silver, and gold, and spices, precious
ointment, and all his armory, and all that was contained in
his treasures; there was not anything in his house, and in all
3 his kingdom, which Hezekiah did not shew. Then came
Isaiah the prophet to king Pezekiah, and said to him, What
did those men say? And whence came they to thee? Hezekiah answered, They came to me from a distant country, from
4 Babylon. Then he said, What have they seen in thy house?
And Hezekiah said, They have seen all that is in my house;
and there is nothing in my treasures which I have not showed
5 to them. Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of
6 Jehovah of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in
thy house, and all that thy fathers have treasured up till this
day, shall be carried to Babylon; and nothing shall be left,
7 saith Jehovah. Of thy sons which shall issue from thee,
whom thou shalt beget, shall they take; and they shall be
8 eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Hezekiah said
to Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast
spoken. And he said, At least there shall be peace and permanency in my days.

CHAPTER XL.

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,
Saith your God.
2 Speak ye according to the heart of Jerusalem;
And cry to her,
That her warfare is accomplished;
That her iniquity[1] is pardoned;
For she hath received at the hand of Jehovah
Double for all her sins.
3 A voice crying in the wilderness,
Prepare the way of Jehovah;
Make straight in the desert a path for our God.
4 Every valley shall be exalted,
And every mountain and hill shall be laid low;
And the crooked shall be made straight,
And the rough places shall become a plain.
5 And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together;

[1] Or, Her misery is ended.

That the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.
6 The voice said,[1] Cry;
And I said, What shall I cry?
All flesh is grass,
And all the goodliness of it as the flower of the field.
7 The grass is withered;
The flower is faded;
Because the breath of Jehovah hath blown upon it.
Surely, the people is grass.
8 The grass withereth;
The flower fadeth;
But the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9 Go up into the high mountain,
O Zion, that bringest tidings;
Lift up thy voice aloud,
O Jerusalem, that bringest tidings;
Lift it up, be not afraid;
Say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God!
10 Behold, the Lord Jehovah shall come with strength;
And his arm shall be powerful.
Behold, his reward is with him,
And his work is before his face.
11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd;
He shall gather the lambs in his arm,
And shall carry them in his bosom,
And shall gently lead those that are with young.

12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,
And measured the heavens with his palm,
And held with three fingers the dust of the earth,
And weighed the mountains in scales,
And the heavens in a balance?
13 Who hath instructed the spirit of Jehovah,
Or hath guided him by counsel,
And hath taught him?
14 From whom sought he counsel, that he might advise him?
And who taught him the path of judgment,
And instructed him in knowledge,
And shewed to him the way of wisdom?
15 Lo, the nations are as a drop of a bucket,
And are reckoned as the small dust of the balance;
Lo, he taketh up the islands as a very little thing.
16 And Lebanon would not be sufficient to make a fire,
Nor its beasts for a burnt-offering.
17 All nations are as nothing before him,
And in comparison of him are reckoned less than nothing,
And what hath no existence.

[1] Or, Was saying.

18 To whom then have ye likened God?
Or what resemblance will ye appoint to him?
19 The workman prepareth a graven image,
The goldsmith overlayeth it with gold,
And (casteth) golden chains.
20 The poor man chooseth for his offering wood that will not rot;
He procureth a skilful workman
To prepare a graven image that shall not be moved.
21 Do ye not know? Have ye not heard?
Hath it not been told you from the beginning?
Have ye not been instructed from the foundations of the earth?
22 It is he that sitteth on the circle of the earth,
The inhabitants of which are as locusts;
He stretcheth out heaven as a curtain,
And spreadeth it out as a tent to be inhabited.
23 He bringeth the mighty to nothing,
The rulers of the earth as if they were not.
24 It is as if they had not been planted;
It is as if they had not been sown;
It is as if their stock had no root in the earth.
Even while he bloweth on them, they wither,
And the whirlwind carrieth them away as stubble.

25 And to whom will ye liken me,
That I may be like? saith the Holy One.
26 Lift up your eyes on high,
And see who hath created those things,
Bringing out their army by number;
He will call to all of them by name;
By the greatness of his strength,
And by the might of his power,
None shall fail.[1]
27 Why wilt thou say,[2] O Jacob?
And why wilt thou speak, O Israel?
My way is hidden from Jehovah,
And my judgment passeth away from my God.
28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard
That Jehovah is the God of eternity,
Who hath created the ends of the earth?
He fainteth not,
And is not worn out by fatigue;
And there is no searching of his understanding.
29 He giveth power to the faint,
And to him who hath no might he imparteth strength.
30 The youths are wearied, and they faint;
And the young men by falling fall.
31 But they who wait upon Jehovah shall gather new strength;
They shall raise their wings, as eagles;

[1] Or, None shall be wanting. [2] Or, Why wouldst thou say?

They shall run, and shall not be wearied;
They shall walk, and shall not faint.

CHAPTER XLI.

1 Be silent to me, O islands;
And let the peoples collect their strength;
Let them draw near; then let them speak;
Let us come near together to judgment.
2 Who raised up righteousness from the east,
Called him to his foot,
Gave nations before him,
And subdued kings;
Gave them as dust to his sword,
And as driven stubble to his bow?
3 He pursued them; he departed in peace,
By the way that his foot had not gone.
4 Who hath appointed and done it?
He who calleth the nations from the beginning.
I Jehovah am the first,
And with the last I am the same.

5 The islands saw, and were afraid;
The farthest boundaries of the earth trembled;
They drew near and came.
6 Every one brought assistance to his neighbour,
And said to his neighbour, Be courageous.
7 The carver encouraged the founder,
And he that beateth with the hammer him that striketh by turns;
And he said, It is good for soldering;
And he fastened it with nails, that it might not be moved.

8 But thou, O Israel, (art) my servant,
O Jacob, whom I have chosen,
Thou seed of Abraham my friend.
9 For I have taken thee from the ends of the earth;
From its eminences have I called thee;
And I have said to thee, Thou art my servant;
I have chosen thee, and have not cast thee off;
10 Fear not, for I am with thee;
Be not terrified, for I am thy God;
For I strengthen thee; yea,[1] I will help thee;
Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.
11 Behold, they who provoke thee
Shall be ashamed and shall blush;
They who contend with thee
Shall become as nothing, and shall perish.

[1] Or, Surely.

12 Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them;
They who contend with thee shall be as nothing,
And they who fight with thee shall be as consumption.
13 For I (am) Jehovah thy God,
Taking hold of thy right hand, and saying to thee,
Fear not, I will help thee.
14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob,
Ye dead men of Israel.
I will help thee, saith Jehovah,
And thy Redeemer,[1] the Holy One of Israel.
15 Behold, I have made thee a cart,
Like a sharp thrashing instrument having teeth;
Thou shalt thrash the mountains, and beat them small;
And thou shalt reduce the hills to dust.
16 Thou shalt winnow them;
And the wind shall carry them away,
And the whirlwind shall scatter them.
But thou shalt rejoice in Jehovah;
Thou shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

17 The needy and poor shall seek waters,
Which are nowhere to be seen;
Their tongue shall be parched with thirst.
I Jehovah will listen to them;
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
18 I will open rivers on lofty mountain-tops,
And fountains in the midst of a plain;
I will make the wilderness pools of waters,
And the dry land fountains of waters.
19 In the wilderness I will give the cedar,
The sloe, the myrtle, and the pine;
I will set in the desert the fir-tree,
The elm and poplar together.
20 Therefore let them see and know;
Let them likewise think and understand;
That the hand of Jehovah hath done this,
And that the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

21 Plead your cause, saith Jehovah;
Produce your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob.
22 Let them bring them forth,
And let them tell us what is to come;
Let them declare the former things which were,
And we will lay our heart to them;
And we shall know the latest of those things;
And declare ye to us what is to come.
23 Tell what shall be hereafter,
That we may know that ye are gods;

[1] Or, Thy Protector.

Yea, do good, or do evil,
That we may relate and likewise may see[1] it.
24 Behold, you are of nothing,
And your work is of nothing;
(The man) hath chosen abomination in you.

25 I have raised him from the north, and he hath come;
From the rising of the sun shall he call on my name;
And he shall come to princes, as to clay;
And he shall tread the clay like a potter.
26 Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know?
Beforehand, and we will say, (He is) righteous.
Surely, there is none that declareth;
Surely, there is none that causeth (us) to hear;
Surely, there is none that heareth your words.
27 The first to Zion; Behold, behold them;
And I will give a messenger to Jerusalem.
28 I looked, and there was none;
I inquired at them, and there was no counsellor;
I asked them, and they answered not a word.
29 Behold, all are vanity;
And their works are a failure;
Their images are wind and confusion.

CHAPTER XLII.

1 Behold, my servant; I will lean upon him;[2]
Mine elect, in whom my soul is well pleased.
I have put my Spirit upon him;
He shall exhibit judgment to the nations.
2 He shall not cry aloud;
He shall not lift up,
Nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets.
3 A bruised reed he shall not break,
And the smoking flax he shall not quench;
He shall bring forth judgment in truth.
4 He shall not faint, nor be discouraged,
Till he set judgment in the earth;
And the islands shall wait for his law.

5 Thus saith God[3] Jehovah,
The Creator of the heavens, and who stretcheth them out;
Who spreadeth out the earth, and its productions;
Giving breath to the people who dwell in it,
And spirit to them who walk on it.
6 I Jehovah have called thee in righteousness,
And will hold thee by thy hand;

[1] Or, May be astonished. [2] Or, I will uphold him.
[3] Or, The mighty.

And will keep thee,
And will place thee for a covenant of the people,
For a light of the nations;
7 That thou mayest open the eyes of the blind;
That thou mayest bring out the prisoners from the prison,
And from the house of the prison those who sit in darkness.
8 I am Jehovah, that is my name;
And my glory will I not give to another,
Nor my praise to graven images.
9 Behold, the former things have come;
And new things do I declare;
Before they spring up, I will make them known to you.

10 Sing to Jehovah a new song,
His praise from the end of the earth;
Ye who go down to the sea, and its fulness;
Ye islands, and their inhabitants.
11 Let the desert and its cities cry aloud,
The villages where Kedar dwelleth;
Let the inhabitants of the rock sing;
And let them shout from the top of the mountains.
12 Let them give glory to Jehovah,
And let them declare his praise in the islands.
13 Jehovah shall go forth as a giant;
And as a warrior shall he rouse his zeal;
He shall cry aloud; he shall shout;
He shall strengthen himself against his adversaries.
14 I have kept silence for a long time;
I have been silent, and have refrained myself;
I will cry like a woman in travail;
I will destroy and swallow at once.
15 I will reduce mountains and hills to a wilderness;
I will dry up all their herbage;
I will make the rivers islands;
And I will dry up the pools.
16 And I will lead the blind by a way which they knew not;
I will cause them to walk in paths which they had not known;
And I will turn darkness before them into light,
And crooked ways into a plain.
These things[1] will I do to them,
And I will not forsake them.

17 They shall be turned back,
With shame shall they be ashamed,
Who trust in a graven image;
And who say to a molten image; Ye are our gods.

18 O ye deaf, hear;

[1] Or, These words.

And ye blind, be attentive to see.
19 Who is blind but my servant?
Who is deaf but my messenger whom I send?
Who is blind as he that is perfect,
And blind as the servant of Jehovah?
20 By seeing many things which thou observest not;
By opening the ears, so that he may not hear.
21 Jehovah is well-pleased on account of his righteousness,
That he may honour and magnify his law.

22 But this people hath been robbed and trodden down;
They shall all be snared in prisons,
And they shall be hidden in caves;
They shall be made a spoil, and there shall be none to deliver;
A prey, and none shall say, Restore.
23 Who among you will hear this?
Who will hearken?
Who will attend for the time to come?
24 Who gave Jacob to be a prey,
And gave up Israel to the robbers?
Was it not Jehovah?
Because we have sinned against him,
And they would not walk in his ways,
And did not hearken to his law.
25 Therefore he hath poured upon him
The fury of his anger,
And the strength of battle.
It set him on fire on every side,
And he gave no heed to it;
It burned him,
But he laid it not to heart.

CHAPTER XLIII.

1 And now thus saith Jehovah,
Thy Creator, O Jacob, and thy Former, O Israel;
Fear not, for I have redeemed (thee);
I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.
2 When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee;
Through rivers, they shall not overflow thee;
When thou shalt pass through the fire itself, thou shalt not be scorched;
And the flame shall not kindle on thee.
3 For I am Jehovah thy God;
The Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour;
I have given Egypt as the price of thy redemption,
Ethiopia and Sheba in thy room.
4 Because thou hast been precious in my eyes,

Thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.
I will give a man in thy stead,
And peoples instead of thy soul.

5 Fear not, for I am with thee;
I will bring thy seed from the East,
And I will gather thee from the West.
6 I will say to the North, Give;
And to the South, Hinder not;
Bring my sons from a distance,
And my daughters from the end of the earth.
7 All are called by my name,
And I have created them for my glory;
I have formed them; yea, I have made them.
8 That I may bring forth the blind people, who have eyes;
And the deaf, who have ears.

9 Let all the nations be assembled together,
And let the peoples be gathered.
Who is there among them to declare this,
And to cause us to hear the former things?
Let them produce their witnesses, they shall be declared righteous;
But let them hear, and they shall say, It is truth.
10 Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah,
And my servant, whom I have chosen.
Therefore ye shall know and believe me;
And ye shall understand that I am He;
Before me there was no god formed;
Nor shall there be after me.
11 I, I[1] am Jehovah;
And there is no Saviour besides me.
12 I have declared, and have saved, and have made you to hear;
And there is no strange (god) among you.
Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah,
That I am God.
13 Even before the day was, I was;
And there is none to deliver out of my hand.
I will do; and who shall disannul it?

14 Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer,
The Holy One of Israel;
For your sake have I sent to Babylon,
And have made them come down.
They are all fugitives;
And the cry of the Babylonians is in the ships.
15 I am Jehovah, your Holy One;

[1] "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I."

The Creator of Israel, your King.
16 Thus saith Jehovah,
Who maketh a way in the sea,
And a path in the stormy waters.
17 When he bringeth (them) out,
The chariot and the horse,
The army and the power,
Lie down together, so that they do not rise.
They are quenched; they are quenched like flax.
18 Remember not the former things,
And mention not the things that are ancient.
19 Behold, I do a new thing;
Now it shall arise;
Shall ye not know it?
This time[1] I will make a way in the wilderness,
Rivers in the desert.
20 The beast of the field shall honour me;
The dragons, and the young of the ostrich;
Because I will give waters in the wilderness,
Rivers in the desert,
To give drink to my people, my chosen.

21 This people have I created for myself;
They shall declare my praise.
22 And thou hast not called on me, O Jacob;
But thou hast been wearied of me, O Israel.
23 Thou hast not brought to me the cattle of thy burnt-offerings;
And thou hast not honoured me with thy sacrifices;
I have not made thee to serve with offering,
Nor to be wearied with incense.
24 Thou hast not bought cane for me with money,
And hast not made me drunk with the fat of thy sacrifices;
But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins;
And thou hast made me to weary with thine iniquities.
25 I, I[2] am He,
Who blot out thine iniquities for my own sake;
Therefore I will not remember thy sins.
26 Bring to my remembrance;
Let us plead together;
Declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.
27 Thy first father hath sinned,
And thy teachers have transgressed against me.
28 Therefore I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary;
And I will make Jacob a curse,
And Israel a reproach.

[1] Or, Surely. [2] "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I."

CHAPTER XLIV.

1 Yet now hear, O Jacob, my servant,
And Israel whom I have chosen.
2 Thus saith Jehovah, thy Maker,
And thy Former from the womb;
He will help thee.
Fear not, O Jacob, my servant,
O beloved, whom I have chosen.
3 For I will pour waters on that which is thirsty,
And floods on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit on thy seed,
And my blessing on thy productions.
4 And they shall spring up as among the grass,
As willows near the streams of waters.
5 One shall say, I belong to Jehovah;
And another shall be called by the name of Jacob;
Another shall write with his hand, (I belong) to Jehovah,
And shall be surnamed by the name of Israel.

6 Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel,
And his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts;
I am the first, and I am also the last;
And besides me there is no God.
7 And who as I shall call,
Shall declare this, and set it in order before me,
Since I appointed the people of the age?
And let them tell them the things that are coming,
And the things that shall come.
8 Fear ye not, and be not terrified.
Have I not since then made thee to hear?
And have I not declared it?
Therefore ye are my witnesses,
That there is no God besides me,
And there is no strong God whom I know not.
9 The formers of a graven image are all vanity;
And their desirable things do not profit;
And they are their own witnesses
That they do not see, nor know;
And therefore they shall be confounded.

10 Who is the maker of God?
And who is it that hath molten a graven image,
Which is profitable for nothing?
11 Behold, all his companions shall be ashamed;
And the workmen themselves are of men;
Though they all assemble, and stand up,
They shall tremble, and be ashamed together.

12 The worker in iron shall take the file;[1]
He shall work in the coals;
He shall form it with hammers;
He shall work in it with the arm of his strength;
He shall even be hungry, so that his strength shall fail;
He shall not drink water, so that he shall faint.
13 The carpenter stretcheth out his rule;
He marketh it with a dyed thread;
He adjusteth it with planes;
He shapeth it with a compass;
He maketh it according to the shape of a man,
According to the image of a man,
That it may remain in the house.
14 He shall cut down for himself cedars;
He shall take the pine and the oak;
He shall supply himself with trees of the forest;
He shall plant a pine which the rain shall nourish.
15 Then shall a man have them for burning;
For he shall take of them, and shall warm himself;
Yea, he shall heat an oven, and shall bake bread;
He shall also make a god, and worship it;
He shall make an idol, and shall bow down before it.
16 Part of it he shall burn in the fire;
Of a part he shall make ready flesh, and shall eat it;
He shall roast roast, and shall be satisfied.
Next, he shall warm himself, and shall say,
Ah! I am warmed, and have seen the fire.
17 The remainder of it he turneth into a god,
Into his graven image;
He boweth down before it;
He worshippeth and prayeth to it,
Saying, Deliver me; for thou art my God.

18 They have not known, nor understood;
For he hath smeared their eyes, that they may not see,
And their heart, that they may not understand.
19 It doth not return into their heart;
They have not knowledge, nor understanding, to say,
Part of it I have burned in the fire;
Yea, on the coals of it have I baked bread;
I have roasted flesh, and have eaten it;
Shall I turn the remainder of it into an abomination?
Shall I bow down before the stock of a tree?
20 He feedeth on ashes:
A deceived heart turneth him aside,
So that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say,
Is there not a lie in my right hand?

[1] Or, The tongs.

21 Remember these things, O Jacob;
And Israel, for thou art my servant;
I have formed thee; thou art my servant;
O Israel, do not thou forget me.
22 I have blotted out, as a cloud, thy iniquities;
As a vapour, thy sins.
Return thou to me;
For I have redeemed thee.

23 Praise, O ye heavens;
For Jehovah hath done it;
Shout, ye lower parts of the earth;
Burst forth into praise, ye mountains;
O forest, and every tree that is in it;
For Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob,
And will be glorified in Israel.

24 Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer,
And thy Maker from the womb:
I am Jehovah, who maketh all things,
Who stretcheth out the heavens above,
Who spreadeth out the earth by my power;[1]
25 Who frustrateth the tokens of the diviners;
Who maketh the soothsayers mad;
Who turneth wise men backward;
And who maketh their knowledge foolishness;
26 Who upholdeth the word of his servant,
And performeth the counsel of his messengers;
Saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited;
And to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built;
And I will raise up her ruins.
27 Who saith to the deep, Be thou dried up;
And I will make dry thy rivers;
28 Who saith to Cyrus, Thou art my shepherd;
And he shall fulfil all my will;
Even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built;
And to the Temple, Thou shalt be founded.

CHAPTER XLV.

1 Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of,
To subdue nations before him;
Therefore will I loose[2] the loins of kings;
To open the doors before him;
Therefore the gates shall not be shut.
2 I will go before thee;
And will make straight the crooked ways;

[1] Or, By myself. [2] Or, I will ungird.

I will break asunder the brazen doors;
And I will hew down the iron bars.
3 And I will give thee treasures of darkness,
And things hidden in secret places;
That thou mayest know that I am Jehovah,
Who call thee by thy name;
Even the God of Israel.
4 For the sake of my servant Jacob,
And for the sake of Israel, mine elect;
I will call thee by thy name;
I will surname thee, though thou hast not known me.

5 I am Jehovah, and there is none besides me;
There is no god besides me;
I have girded thee, though thou hast not known me.
6 Therefore shall they know,
From the rising of the sun,
And from the west,
That there is none besides me.
I am Jehovah;
And there is none besides me.
7 Forming light, and creating darkness;
Making peace, and creating evil;
I Jehovah do all these things.
8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above;
And let the clouds pour down righteousness
Let the earth be opened;
And let salvation and righteousness come forth;
Let her bring them forth together:
I Jehovah have created it.

9 Wo to him that striveth with his Maker!
A potsherd to the potsherds of the earth.
Shall the clay say to his maker, Why hast thou made?
And, Thy work hath no hands?
10 Wo to him that saith to his father, Why hast thou begotten?
And to the woman, Why dost thou bring forth?

11 Thus saith Jehovah,
The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker;
Ask me of things to come;
Concerning my sons command ye me,
And concerning the work of my hands.
12 I have made the earth,
And have created man upon it;
It is I, whose hands have stretched out the heavens;
And all their army have I commanded.
13 I have raised him up in righteousness,
And will make straight all his ways.

He shall build my city,
And shall release my captivity;
Not for price nor for reward,
Saith Jehovah of hosts.

14 Thus saith Jehovah;
The labour of Egypt, the merchandise of Ethiopia,
And the Sabeans of great stature,
Shall pass over to thee, and shall be thine;
They shall walk behind thee;
In chains shall they pass over,
And shall reverence and beseech thee.
Surely[1] God is in thee;
And there is no other besides God.
15 Truly thou art a God that hidest thyself,
O God of Israel, the Saviour!
16 All of them shall be covered with shame,
And shall even blush:
With shame shall go away together
All the makers of graven images.
17 Israel hath been saved in Jehovah with eternal salvation;
Ye shall not be covered with shame;
Neither shall ye blush even for ever.

18 For thus saith Jehovah, who createth the heavens;
God himself, the Maker of the earth;
Who made it, and furnished it;
He created it not empty;
He formed it to be inhabited;
I am Jehovah, and there is none besides me.
19 Not in secret have I spoken,
In a place of the darkness of the earth;
Not in vain have I said to the seed of Jacob, Seek me;
I Jehovah speak righteousness;
I declare what is right.

20 Assemble yourselves, and come;
Draw near together, ye rejected[2] of the nations.
They know nothing, who carry about the wood of a graven image,
And who pray to a god who cannot save.
21 Publish ye, and bring forward;
Yea, let them consult together.
Who hath caused this to be heard from the beginning?
And who hath declared it from ancient times?
Is it not I Jehovah?
And there is no other god besides me;
A just God, and a Saviour;
There is none besides me.

[1] Or, Only. [2] Or, Ye distant.

22 Look to me, and ye shall be saved,
All the ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is none else.
23 By myself have I sworn;
In righteousness hath the word gone out of my mouth,
Which shall not return;
That to me every knee shall bend;
Every tongue shall swear.
24 Surely in Jehovah, will he say,
Have I righteousness and strength;
To him shall he come;
And all who provoke him shall be ashamed.
25 In Jehovah all the seed of Israel
Shall be justified,
And shall glory.

CHAPTER XLVI.

1 Bel hath bowed down;
Nebo is fallen;
Their images shall be on the beasts and the cattle;
They who carry you are burdened by you;
A wearisome burden.
2 They bowed down; they stooped together;
And they could not withdraw themselves from the burden;
And their soul hath gone away into captivity.

3 Hear me, O house of Jacob;
All ye the remnant of the house of Israel;
Who are borne from the womb;
Who are carried from the breast.
4 And even to old age I am the same;
And even to grey hairs I will carry.
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry, and will save.

5 To whom will ye liken, and make me equal,
And compare me, that I may be like?
6 Lavishing gold out of bags;
Weighing silver in a balance;
They shall hire a goldsmith, to make of it a god;
To bow down before it, and to worship it.
7 They shall carry him on the shoulder;
They shall lead him about;
They shall put him in his place;
There shall he stand;
From his place shall he not remove;
Moreover, if any one cry to him, he will not answer,
Nor deliver him from his trouble.

8 Remember ye this, and blush ;[1]
Return to your heart, ye transgressors.
9 Remember the former things of old ;
For I am God, and there is none besides,
And there is none like me.
10 Declaring the latest event from the beginning,
And from antiquity those things which had not yet been done;
Saying, My counsel shall stand,
And I will do whatever I wish.
11 Calling a bird[2] from the east,
From a distant country the man of my counsel ;
I have spoken, and accordingly I will accomplish it ;
I have thought, and I will do it.
12 Hear me, ye that are stubborn in heart,
Who are far from righteousness.
13 I will cause my righteousness to come near,
And it shall not be delayed ;
And my salvation shall not tarry ;
And I will place salvation in Zion,
And my glory in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XLVII.

1 Come down, and sit in the dust,
O virgin daughter of Babylon;
Sit on the ground;
There is no throne for the daughter of the Babylonians ;
For they shall no more call thee tender and delicate.
2 Take millstones, and grind meal ;
Unbind thy curled locks, make bare the feet;
Uncover the limbs, that thou mayest cross the rivers.
3 Thy baseness shall be exposed,
And thy shame shall be seen ;
I will take vengeance, and will not meet a man.[3]
4 Our Redeemer, his name is Jehovah of hosts,
The Holy One of Israel.

5 Sit thou silent, enter into darkness,
O daughter of the Babylonians ;
For they shall no longer call thee the mistress of kingdoms.
6 I was angry with my people ;
I profaned my inheritance ;
And I gave them up into thy hand ;
Thou didst not shew compassion to them ;
On the old man didst thou heavily lay thy yoke.
7 And thou saidst, I shall for ever be a mistress.
Hitherto thou hast not applied thy mind to it,
And hast not remembered her end.

[1] Or, Take courage. [2] Or, a thought. [3] Or, As a man.

8 But now hear this, thou delicate woman,
That sitteth confidently;
Who saith in her heart, I am,
And there is none besides me;
I shall not sit as a widow,
And I shall not know bereavement.
9 But those two things shall suddenly come to thee,
Bereavement and widowhood;
In their perfection shall they come upon thee,
For the multitude[1] of thy divinations,
And for the abundance of thy auguries.
10 For thou trustedst in thy malice;
Thou saidst, No one seeth me.
Thy wisdom and thy knowledge have led thee astray;
And thou saidst in thy heart, It is I, and there is none besides me.
11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee, the dawn of which thou knowest not;[2]
Crushing shall fall upon thee, which thou shalt not be able to avert;
Destruction shall suddenly come upon thee, which thou knowest not.

12 Stand now amidst thy divinations,
And amidst the multitude of thy auguries,
In which thou hast wearied thyself from thy youth;
If perhaps thou mayest be profited,
If perhaps thou mayest prevail.
13 Thou hast wearied thyself with the multitude of thy counsels;
Let the binders of the heavens,
The watchers of the stars, who predict by the moon,
Stand now and deliver thee
From those things which shall come upon thee.
14 Behold, they shall be as stubble;
The fire shall burn them;
They shall not deliver their soul from the strength of the flame;
There shall not be a coal to warm,
Nor a light at which they may sit.
15 So shall they be to thee with whom thou weariedst thyself,
Thy traders from thy youth.
Every one shall wander into his own quarter;
There shall be no one to save thee.

[1] Or, In the multitude.
[2] "Et tu ne sçauras d'où il viendra." "And thou shalt not know whence it shall come."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

1 Hear this, O house of Jacob,
Ye who are called by the name of Israel,
Who have come forth from the waters of Judah,
Who swear by the name of Jehovah,
And remember the God of Israel,
Not in truth, nor in righteousness.
2 For from the holy city they are called,
And they rely on the God of Israel,
Whose name is Jehovah of hosts.
3 Long ago did I declare the former things;
They went out of my mouth;
I published them;
I did them suddenly, and they came.
4 For I knew that thou art obstinate;
And thy neck is an iron sinew;
And thy forehead is of brass.
5 Long ago did I declare them to thee;
Before they came, I shewed to thee;
Lest perhaps thou shouldst say,
My idol hath done these things;
My graven image and my molten image hath commanded them.

6 Thou hast heard; see all things;
And will ye not declare them?
Even now have I made thee to hear new things,
And hidden things, which thou didst not know.
7 Now for the first time have they been created,
And not long ago, nor by a succession of time;
Thou hadst not heard them;
Lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew.
8 Surely thou hadst not heard;
Surely thou hadst not known;
Surely it is not long since thine ear was opened;
For I knew that by transgressing thou didst transgress;
Therefore have I called thee a rebel from the womb.
9 For my name's sake I will delay my fury;
And for my praise I will restrain myself toward thee,
So as not to cut thee off.
10 Behold, I have tried thee, and not like silver;
I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.
11 For mine own sake, for mine own sake, will I do it;
For how shall my name be profaned?
And I will not give my glory to another.

12 Hear me, O Jacob,

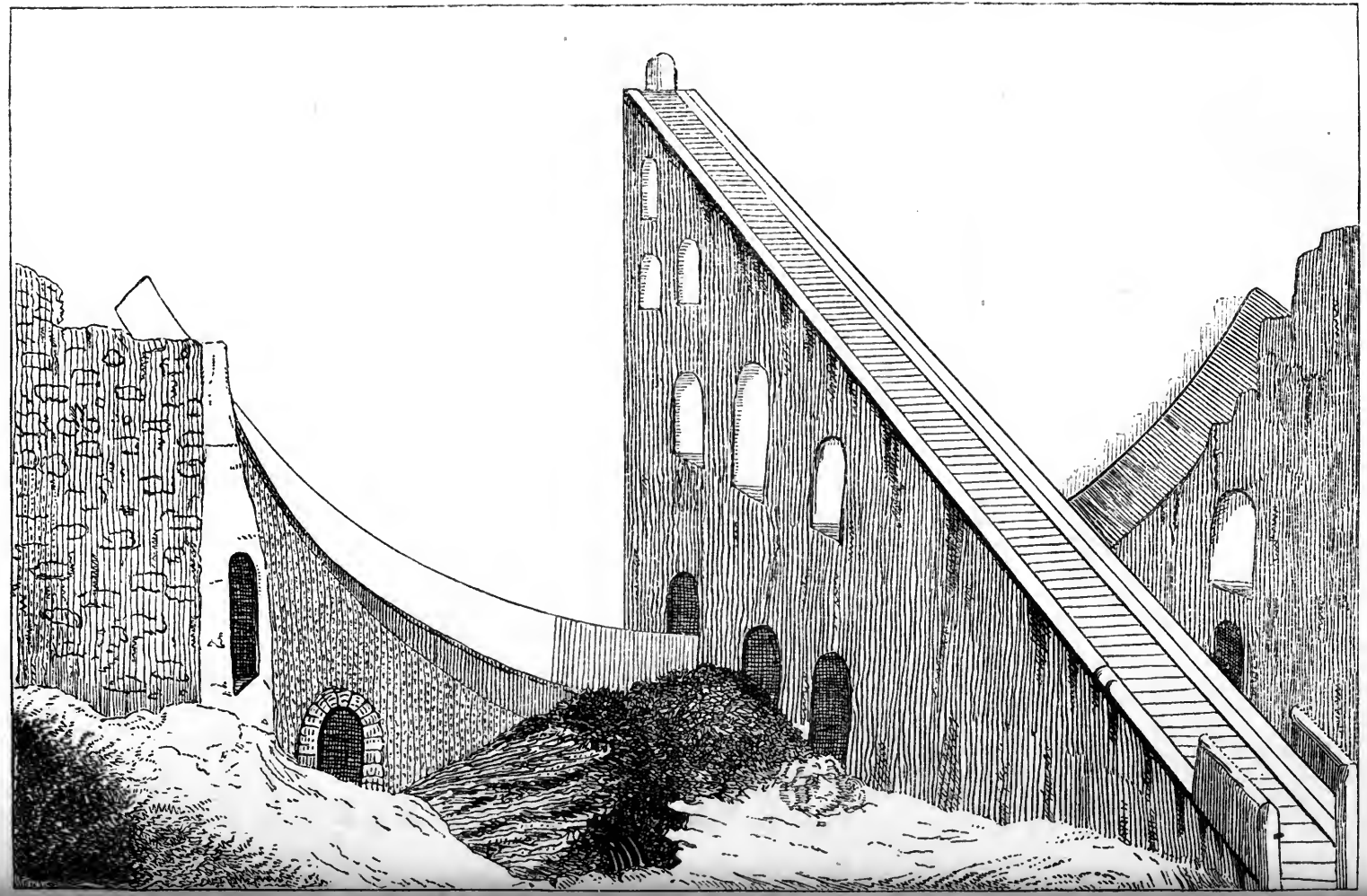
And O Israel, my called;
I, even I, am the first;
Also I am the last.
13 Surely my hand hath founded the earth;
And my right hand hath measured[1] the heavens with the palm;
When I call them, they stand up[2] together.
14 Assemble yourselves, all of you, and hear.
Who among them declareth those things?
Jehovah hath loved him,
And will execute his pleasure against Babylon,
And his arm[3] against the Babylonians.
15 I, I[4] have spoken;
Surely I have called him, I have led him;
Therefore he shall prosper in his way.
16 Draw near to me, hear this.
I have not spoken in secret from the beginning;
Since the thing was done, there was I;
And now the Lord Jehovah, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

17 Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer,
The Holy One of Israel.
I am Jehovah thy God,
Who teacheth thee profitably,
Who directeth thee in the way which thou goest.
18 O if thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!
Then should thy peace have been as a river,
And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.
19 Thy seed should have been as the sand,
And the children of thy womb as the small stones of it;
Her name would not be cut off,
And would not be destroyed before my face.

20 Come forth from Babylon;
Flee from the Babylonians.
With the voice of rejoicing tell this;
Publish, and carry it even to the end of the earth.
Say ye, Jehovah hath redeemed his servant Jacob.
21 Therefore they thirsted not when he led them through th deserts;
He made water to flow to them from the rock;
He clave the rock, and the waters flowed out.
22 There is no peace, saith Jehovah to the wicked.

[1] Or, Hath upheld.
[2] Or, They shall stand up.
[3] Or, His work.
[4] "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I."

THE SUN-DIAL OF AHAZ.



NOTE TO PAGE 163.

THE SUN-DIAL OF AHAZ.

THIS is believed to be the earliest account of a SUN-DIAL that is anywhere to be found in history, and, on that account, has arrested the attention of scholars little addicted to the study of the Holy Scriptures. The form of it, which can now be nothing else than a matter of ingenious conjecture, has been investigated with uncommon industry, and illustrated with great profusion of learning. Little aid can be obtained from the incidental notice of the sacred historian, which our author has expounded with more than his usual conciseness.

A preliminary question relates to the Hebrew word מעלות, (*măgnălōth,*) which, like the Latin word *gradus*, literally means *steps*, but might naturally enough mean *degrees*. It has been contended that *βαθμοὺς*, the term used by JOSEPHUS, is liable to a similar ambiguity, and may have been used by him in its literal signification. MICHAELIS differed so widely from this view, that he considered מעלה (*măgnălāh*) to signify *a degree*, in the sense used by modern mathematicians, who divide a circle into 360 degrees, so that 10 degrees (10°) would denote the ninth part of a right angle; and he supports his opinion by shewing that this use of the word *degree* did not take its rise among European philosophers, but travelled from the East, and, like our ordinary numerals, had an Arabic origin.

Assuming that the word denotes *steps*, there is still abundant room for diversity of interpretation. Some have

thought that there was a flight of steps leading to the royal palace of AHAZ, on the top of which was placed a *gnomon*, (or obelisk,) and that the *steps* served to measure the shadow of the sun which was thrown upon them. Others refer it to an earlier period, when the sun-dial consisted of a massive structure, towering into the sky like other monuments of Oriental architecture, and built with scientific precision, but unfitted by its cumbrous form to vie with the accuracy and elegance of lighter instruments which belong to a more advanced age of science. The type of such buildings is naturally sought, not in Judea, where such studies were never cultivated, but among the Egyptians, and especially among the Babylonians, to whom the Greeks and other nations were indebted for their knowledge of astronomy. *Πόλον μὲν γὰρ, καὶ γνώμονα, καὶ τὰ δυώδεκα μέρεα τῆς ἡμέρης, παρὰ Βαβυλωνίων ἔμαθον οἱ Ἕλληνες.* "For the Greeks learned from the Babylonians the dial, and the gnomon, and the division of the day into twelve (parts) hours." (Herodot. Eut., 109.) Nothing is more natural than to suppose that Ahaz directed some architect to copy a celebrated building in BABYLON, the general form of which may be gathered from the description given by BISHOP STOCK,* whose version of the passage, and note, accompanied by a drawing, we shall lay before our readers:—

> "BEHOLD, I TURN THE SHADOW OF THE DEGREES,
> BY WHICH THE SUN IS GONE DOWN ON THE DIAL OF AHAZ,[1]
> BACKWARD TEN DEGREES.
> SO THE SUN TURNED BACK TEN DEGREES,
> ON THE DIAL, BY WHICH IT HAD GONE DOWN.

"[1] *The dial of Ahaz.* Heb. *the steps* (or degrees) *of Ahaz.* The researches of curious travellers in HINDOSTAN have lately discovered, in that country, three OBSERVATORIES of similar form; the most remarkable of which is to be seen within four miles of DELHI, the ancient capital of THE MOGUL EMPIRE. To the politeness of THOMAS DANIEL, Esq., R.A., I am indebted for the annexed

* "The Book of the Prophet Isaiah in Hebrew and English. The Hebrew Text metrically arranged: The Translation altered from that of Bishop Lowth. With Notes, critical and explanatory. By Joseph Stock, D.D., Bishop of Killala," &c. Quarto. Bath, 1803; pp. 108, 109.

sketch of this Observatory, copied from an excellent painting in oil, made by that ingenious gentleman on the spot, and now offered for sale at his house in London. The reader acquainted with astronomy will see immediately how such a building must answer the double purpose of an *Observatory* and a *Dial*. A rectangled triangle, whose hypothenuse is a staircase, (apparently parallel to the axis of the earth,) bisects a zone, or coping of a wall, which wall connects the two terminating towers at right and left. The coping itself is of a circular form, and accurately graduated, to mark, by the shadow of the gnomon above, the sun's progress before and after noon; for when the sun is in the zenith, he shines directly on the staircase, and the shadow falls beyond the coping. A flat surface on the top of the triangle, and a gnomon, fitted the building for the purposes of an Observatory.

"According to the known law of refraction, a cloud or body of air of different density from the common atmosphere, interposed between the gnomon and the coping, or dial-plate below, would, if the cloud were denser than the atmosphere, cause the shadow to recede from the perpendicular height of the staircase, and of course to reascend the steps on the coping by which it had before noon gone down; and if the cloud were rarer, a contrary event would take place. This suggests the manner in which the shadow might be made to go either back or forward, agreeably to the option proposed by Isaiah to Hezekiah, 2 *Kings* xx. 9.

"That the miracle did not consist in a reversing of the earth's diurnal rotation, but was restrained לארץ (*laaretz*) to the land of Judea merely, is plain from 2 *Chron.* xxxii. 31. Neither is the importance of the sign itself, as an evidence of the divine power and veracity, in any degree diminished by the suggestion, that the effect might in part be produced by natural means; for the wonder still remains, that a cloud of a particular nature should be brought forward at a place and time previously announced."

In what manner *the shadow was made to go backward ten degrees* is a question totally distinct from the form of the dial. That it was effected by a motion of the sun itself, or by a change of the relative position of the earth to that luminary, though this has been boldly stated and argued, is a notion too extravagant to need refutation. There is plausibility in the view suggested by DOEDERLEIN, that "the change of the shadow depended entirely on a cloud, which

intercepted, and in a manner altogether extraordinary refracted, the rays of the sun, and thus made the shadow or the light to go back ten degrees." ROSENMÜLLER relates, on the authority of another commentator, an alteration of the shadow of a sun-dial, to the extent of an hour and half, which was effected by the shadow of a cloud at METZ, in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Without inquiring into the historical evidence of such an occurrence, or entering into long and intricate reasonings on the principles of optics, which would be unsuitable to this place, we shall only remark, that the transaction was undoubtedly miraculous; for it is declared to have been "a sign from Jehovah." In this respect, it is but one of innumerable miracles which were performed by an Almighty hand in the sight of the Jewish people, and which have been recorded in order to strengthen the faith, and aid the devotion, of the worshippers of God in all ages, who delight to "praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."—*Ed.*

END OF VOLUME THIRD.

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